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LECTURES

IN

DIVINITY,

BY THE LATE

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GEORGE HILL, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS.

EDITED FROM HIS MANUSCRIPT,

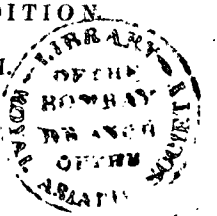
BY HIS SON,

ALEXANDER HILL, D.D.

MINISTER OF DAILLY.

THIRD EDITION.

VOL. I.



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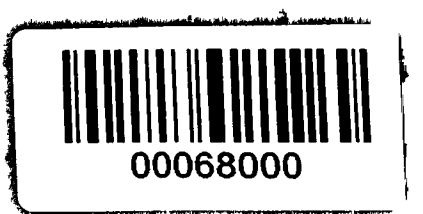

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PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR.

THE Author of the following Lectures was appointed Professor of Divinity in 1778, and completed the plan which he had formed for himself, in about four years. In every succeeding year, he revised with unwearied care that part of his course which he intended to read to his students; and not a few of the Lectures appear to have been recently transcribed. He took no steps himself for publishing them as a whole; but he is known to have had this in contemplation; and at his death he consigned them to the Editor, in such terms as implied that the publication of them would not be in opposition to his wishes.

It will be agreeable, the Editor believes, to the wishes of that large proportion of the ministers of the church of Scotland, who went from the hall of St. Mary's College with unfeigned respect for the character and talents of the Author, to peruse those prelections which commanded the attention of their earlier years. And he is well persuaded, that there are many, who, from personal attachment to the Author, or from a knowledge of

his high reputation, are anxious to become acquainted with his sentiments, on points so important as those which his Lectures embrace.

These considerations alone, however, would not have induced the Editor to disclose his father's manuscripts to the public eye. In the conclusion of his opening address, as Professor of Divinity, the Author pledged himself by making this solemn declaration: "Under the blessing and direction of the Almighty, in whose hands I am, and to whom I must give account, no industry or research, no expense of time or of thought, shall be wanting on my part, to render my labours truly useful to the students of divinity in this college." It was under a strong impression that this pledge has been fully redeemed;—in the firm belief that the publication of his theological lectures, one of the principal fruits of the Author's active and laborious life, will do honour to his memory;—and in the anxious hope that the object, for which the Lectures were written, to teach and to defend "the truth as it is in Jesus," may be thus more largely attained, that the Editor resolved to present them to the world.

He cannot withdraw from the charge, which he has felt it both a duty and a pleasure to fulfil, without expressing the increased veneration, which an attentive perusal of the Lectures has excited in his bosom for the Author; and without offering a fervent prayer to God, that the church, of which he formed so distinguished a member, may never want men, on whom the example

of his diligence and success may freely operate, who may be equally eminent in biblical and theological learning, and may cherish his liberal, enlightened, and truly Christian views.

The Author himself divided his course into Books, and Chapters, and Sections, first when he printed the heads of his Lectures for the use of his students, and afterwards in a larger work, entitled "Theological Institutes." In the present publication the same arrangement has been adopted. This has necessarily led to some inconsiderable changes on the Lectures, as they were read from the chair. But the Editor has been scrupulous in making as few other alterations on the manuscript as possible. The introductory discourse to the students, which related to the sentiments and character essential for them to maintain, has been much abridged, as it bore in some measure upon local circumstances in the University of St. Andrews. And towards the end of this work, it will be found, by a reference to the notes, that those parts of the course have been omitted, which the Author himself had previously given to the public.

It was the wish of the Editor to subjoin a note of reference to every quotation made by the Author. But in the manuscript it frequently happened that there was nothing to lead him particularly to the passage or authority cited. In his remote situation he had not access to all the books which it was necessary to consult; and even with the assistance of his friends, he has not been

uniformly successful in comparing the quotations with the works from which they are extracted.

He has annexed to different chapters the names of the books which the Author was accustomed to recommend to his students, with some of the comments which he made on them. His remarks, however, were usually delivered without having been written; and hence, comparatively few are preserved.

It may be thought, that the printed list of books recommended is far from being complete. But it is to be considered, that, at the commencement of the Author's labours, the library of St. Andrews was deficient in modern theological works; that those which were more immediately useful were only gradually procured; that it was far from being his object to load the memory, or to distract the attention of his students by multifarious reading; and that, as the business of his profession occupied his mind to the end of his days, it is probable that there was no publication of moment, which he had an opportunity of perusing, of which he did not in his class-room deliver an opinion.

MANSE OF DAILLY,
April 23, 1821.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It was in contemplation to present the following course of Lectures complete, by subjoining to this edition the View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, and the Counsels respecting the Duties of the Pastoral Office, which were published during the Author's lifetime. But being unwilling to make alterations on a work which has been so favourably received, the Editor sends it forth in the state in which it originally appeared, only freed, he trusts, from many of the errata which had crept into the first edition. Such readers, as may wish to peruse those parts of the course which are not contained in this work, will find a note referring to them at the end of the Lectures.

Manse of Dailly,
April 21, 1825.

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE established character of Principal Hill's Theological Lectures, and the gratifying testimonies which have been borne to their value, not in the Scottish church alone, but also by distinguished men in other portions of the Church of Christ, have induced the Editor to present them again, unchanged as to the matter of which they treat.

The form in which they now appear has been adopted with the view of making them more generally accessible than they were, and of suiting the convenience, in particular, of Students of Divinity. To them, and to readers of every description, the Index, which is subjoined to this Edition, will probably be useful.

April, 1833.

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LECTURES IN DIVINITY.

BOOK I.

EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

THE professed design of students in divinity is to prepare for a most honourable and important office, for being workers together with God in that great and benevolent scheme, by which he is restoring the virtue and happiness of his intelligent offspring, and for holding, with credit to themselves and with advantage to the public, that station in society, by the establishment of which the wisdom of the state lends its aid to render the labours of the servants of Christ respectable and useful. Learning, prudence, and eloquence never can be so worthily employed as when they are devoted to the improvement of mankind: and a good man will find no exertion of his talents so pleasing as that by which he endeavours to make other men such as they ought to be. We expect the breast of every student of divinity to be possessed with these views. If any person is devoid of them, if he despises the office of a minister of the gospel, if the character of his mind is such as to derive no satisfaction from the employments of that office, or from the object towards which they are directed, he ought to

turn his attention to some other pursuit. He cannot expect to attain eminence or to enjoy comfort in a station, for which he carries about with him an inward disqualification; and there is an hypocrisy most disgraceful and most hurtful to his moral character in all the external appearances of preparing for that station.

In attempting to lead you through that course of study which is immediately connected with your profession, I begin with what is called the Deistical Controversy, that is, with a view of the Evidences of Christianity, and of the various questions which have arisen in canvassing the branches of which they are composed.

I assume, as the ground-work of every religious system, these two great doctrines, that "God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek him."* When I say that I assume them, I do not mean that human reason unassisted by revelation was ever able to demonstrate these doctrines in a manner satisfactory to every understanding. But I mean that these doctrines are agreeable to the natural impressions of the human mind, and that any religious system, which purifies them from the manifold errors with which they have been incorporated, corresponds, in that respect, to the clear deductions of enlightened reason.

It is not my province to enter into any detail upon the proofs of these two doctrines of natural religion; and I am afraid to engage in discussions which have been conducted with much erudition and metaphysical acuteness, lest I should be enticed to employ too large a portion of your time in reviewing them. Leaving you to avail yourselves of the copious sources of information which writers upon this subject afford, I will not enumerate, far less attempt to appreciate, the different modes of reasoning which have been adopted in proof of the being of God, and of his moral government. But, having assumed these doctrines, I think it proper to give, by way of introduction to my course, a short view of the manner in which it appears to me that they may be established as the ground-work of all religion.

When we say that there is a God, we mean that the universe is the work of an intelligent Being; that is, from the things which we behold, we infer the existence of what

* Hebrews xi. 6.

is not the object of our senses. To show that the inference is legitimate, we must be able to state the principles upon which it proceeds, or the steps of that process by which the mind advances, from the contemplation of the objects with which it is conversant, to the conviction of the existence of their Creator. These principles are found in the constitution of the human mind, in sentiments and perceptions which are natural and ultimate, which are manifested by all men upon various occasions, and which are only followed out to their proper conclusion when they conduct us to the knowledge of God. One of these sentiments and perceptions appears in the spirit of inquiry and investigation which universally prevails; another is invariably excited by the contemplation of order, beauty, and design.

A spirit of inquiry and investigation has larger opportunities of exertion, it is better directed, and is applied to nobler objects, with some than with others. But, to a certain degree, it is common to all men, and traces of it are found amongst all ranks. Now you will observe that this spirit of inquiry is an effort to discover the cause of what we behold. And it proceeds upon this natural perception, that every new event, every thing which we see coming into existence, every alteration in any being, is an effect. Without hesitation we conclude that it has been produced, and we are solicitous to discover the cause of it. We begin our inquiries with eagerness; we pursue them as far as we have light to carry us; and we do not rest satisfied till we arrive at something which renders farther inquiries unnecessary. This persevering spirit of inquiry, which is daily exerted about trifles, finds the noblest subject of exertion in the continual changes which we behold upon the appearances of the heavenly bodies, upon the state of the atmosphere, upon the surface of the earth, and in those hidden regions which the progress of art leads man to explore. To every attentive and intelligent observer, these continual changes present the whole universe as an effect; and, in contemplating the succession of them, he is led, as by the hand of nature, through a chain of subordinate and dependent causes to that great original cause from whom the universe derived its being, upon whose operation depend all the changes of which it is susceptible, and by whose uncontrolled agency all events are directed.

Even without forming any extensive observations upon the train of natural events, we are led by the same spirit of inquiry, from considering our own species, to the knowledge of our Creator. Every man knows that he had a beginning, and that he derived his being from a succession of creatures like himself. However far back he supposes this succession to be carried, it does not afford a satisfying account of the cause of his existence. By the same principle which directs him in every other research, he is still led to seek for some original Being, who has been produced by none, and is himself the Father of all. As every man knows that he came into existence, so he has the strongest reason to believe that the whole race to which he belongs had a beginning. A tradition has in all ages been preserved of the origin of the human race. Many nations have boasted of antiquity. None have pretended to eternity. All that their records contain beyond a certain period is fabulous or doubtful. In looking back upon the history of mankind, we find them increasing in numbers, acquiring a taste for the ornaments of life, and improving in the liberal arts and sciences; so that unless we adopt without proof and against all probability the supposition of successive deluges which drown in oblivion all the attainments of civilized nations, and spare only a few savage inhabitants to propagate the race, we find in the state of mankind all the marks of novelty which it must have borne, had it begun to be some few thousand years ago. But if the human race had a beginning, we unavoidably regard it as an effect of which we require some original cause; and to the same cause from which it derived existence we must also trace the qualities by which the race is distinguished. The Being who gave it existence must be capable of imparting to it these qualities, that is, must possess them in a much higher degree. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"* Thus, from the intelligence of men, we necessarily infer that of their Creator; while the number of intelligent beings with whom we converse cannot fail to give us the noblest idea of that original primary intelligence from which theirs is derived.

* Psal. xciv. 9, 10.

While the spirit of inquiry, which is natural to man, thus leads us from the consciousness of our own existence to acknowledge the existence of one supreme intelligent Being, the Father of Spirits, we are conducted to the same conclusion by that other natural perception which I said is invariably excited by the contemplation of order, beauty, and design.

The grandeur and beauty of external objects do not seem to affect the other animals. But they afford a certain degree of pleasure to all men; and in many persons a taste for them is so far cultivated that the pleasures of imagination constitute a large source of refined enjoyment. When grandeur and beauty are conjoined as they seldom fail to be with utility, they do not merely afford us pleasure. We not only perceive the objects which we behold, to be grand and beautiful and useful; but we perceive them to be effects produced by a designing cause. In viewing a complicated machine, it is the design which strikes us. In admiring the object, we admire the mind that formed it. Without hesitation we conclude that it had a former; and, although ignorant of every other circumstance respecting him, we know this much, that he is possessed of intelligence, our idea of which rises in proportion to the design discovered in the construction of the machine. By this principle, which is prior to all reasoning, and of which we can give no other account than that it is part of the constitution of the human mind, we are raised from the admiration of natural objects to a knowledge of the existence, and a sense of the perfections of Him who made them.

When we contemplate the works of nature, distinguished from those of art by their superior elegance, splendour, and utility; when we behold the sun, the moon, and the stars, performing their offices with the most perfect regularity, and, although removed at an immense distance from us, contributing in a high degree to our preservation and comfort; when we view this earth fitted as a convenient habitation for man, adorned with numberless beauties, and provided not only with a supply of our wants, but with every thing that can minister to our pleasure and entertainment; when, extending our observation to the various animals that inhabit this globe, we find that every crea-

ture has its proper food, its proper habitation, its proper happiness; that the meanest insect as well as the noblest animal has the several parts of its body, the senses bestowed upon it, and the degree of perfection in which it possesses them, adapted with the nicest proportion to its preservation and to the manner of life which by natural instinct it is led to pursue; when we thus discover within our own sphere, numberless traces of kind and wise design, and when we learn, both by experience and by observation, that the works of nature, the more they are investigated and known, appear the more clearly to be parts of one great consistent whole, we are necessarily led by the constitution of our mind to believe the being of a God. Our faith does not stand in the obscure reasonings of philosophers. We but open our eyes, and discerning, wheresoever we turn them, the traces of a wise Creator, we see and acknowledge his hand. The most superficial view is sufficient to impress our minds with a sense of his existence. The closest scrutiny, by enlarging our acquaintance with the innumerable final causes that are found in the works of God, strengthens this impression, and confirms our first conclusions. The more that we know of these works, we are the more sensible that in nature there is not only an exertion of power, but an adjustment of means to an end, which is what we call wisdom; and an adjustment of means to the end of distributing happiness to all the creatures, which is the highest conception that we can form of goodness.

A foundation so deeply laid in the constitution of the human mind for the belief of a Deity has produced an acknowledgment of his being, almost universal. The idea of God, found amongst all nations civilized in the smallest degree, is such that by the slightest use of our faculties we must acquire it. And accordingly the few nations who are said to have no notion of God are in a state so barbarous that they seem to have lost the perceptions and sentiments of men.

The Atheist allows it to be necessary that something should have existed of itself from eternity. But he is accustomed to maintain that matter in motion is sufficient to account for all those appearances, from which we infer the being of God. The absurdities of this hypothesis have

been ably exposed. He supposes that matter is self-existent, although it has marks of dependence and imperfection inconsistent with that attribute. He supposes that matter has from eternity been in motion, that is, that motion is an essential quality of matter, although we cannot conceive of motion as any other than an accidental property of matter, impressed by some cause, and determined in its direction by foreign impulses. He supposes that all the appearances of uniformity and design which surround him can proceed from irregular undirected movements. And he supposes, lastly, that although there is not a plant which does not spring from its seed, or an insect which is not propagated by its kind, yet matter in motion can produce life and intelligence, properties repugnant in the highest degree to all the known properties of matter.

I do not say that it is possible by reasoning to demonstrate that these suppositions are false; and I do not know that it is wise to make the attempt. The belief of the being of God rests upon a sure foundation, upon the foundation on which He himself has rested it, if all the suppositions by which some men have tried to set it aside contradict the natural perceptions of the human mind. These are the language in which God speaks to his creatures, a language which is heard through all the earth; and the words of which are understood to the end of the world. By listening to that language we learn, from the various yet uniform phenomena of nature, that there is a wise Creator: we are taught, by the imperfection and dependence of the soul, that it owes its being to some original cause; and in its extensive faculties, its liberty, and power of self-motion, we discern that cause to be essentially different from matter. The voice of nature thus proclaims to the children of men the existence of one supreme intelligent Being, and calls them with reverence to adore the Father of their spirits.

The other great doctrine, which I assume as the groundwork of every religious system, is thus expressed by the Apostle to the Hebrews: "God is a rewarder of them that seek Him;" in other words, the government of God is a moral government.

We are here confined to an inconsiderable spot in the creation, and we are permitted to behold but a small part

of the operations of Providence. It becomes us therefore to proceed in our inquiries concerning the Divine Government with much humility: but it does not become us to desist. The character and the laws of that government, under which we acknowledge that we live, are matters to us of the last importance; and it is our duty thankfully to avail ourselves of the light which we enjoy. The constitution of human nature and the state of the world are the only two subjects, within the sphere of our observations, from which unassisted reason can discover the character of the divine government.

When we attend to the constitution of human nature, the three following particulars occur as traces of a moral government.

1. The distribution of pleasure and pain in the mind of man is a moral distribution. Those affections and that conduct which we denominate virtuous are attended with immediate pleasure; the opposite affections and conduct with immediate pain. The man who acts under the influence of benevolence, gratitude, a regard to justice and truth, is in a state of enjoyment. The heart which is actuated by resentment or malice is a stranger to joy. Here is a striking fact of a very general kind furnishing very numerous specimens of a moral government.

2. There is a faculty in the human mind which approves of virtue, and condemns vice. It is not enough to say that righteousness is prudent because it is attended with pleasure; that wickedness is foolish because it is attended with pain. Conscience, in judging of them, pronounces the one to be right, and the other to be wrong. The righteous, supported by that most delightful of all sentiments, the sense that he is doing his duty, proceeds with self-approbation, and reflects upon his conduct with complacence; the wicked not only is distracted by the conflict of various wretched passions, but acts under the perpetual conviction that he is doing what he ought not to do. The hurry of business or the tumult of passion may, for a season, so far drown the voice of conscience, as to leave him at liberty to accomplish his purpose. But when his mind is cool, he perceives that in following blindly the impulse of appetite he has acted beneath the dignity of his reasonable nature; the indulgence of malevolent affections is punished by the

sentiment of remorse; and he despises himself for every act of baseness.

3. Conscience, anticipating the future consequences of human actions, forebodes that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. The righteous, although naturally modest and unassuming, not only enjoys present serenity, but looks forward with good hope. The prospect of future ease lightens every burden, and the view of distant scenes of happiness and joy holds up his head in the time of adversity. But every crime is accompanied with a sense of deserved punishment. To the man who has disregarded the admonitions of conscience she soon begins to utter her dreadful presages; she lays open to his view the dismal scenes which lie beyond every unlawful pursuit; and sometimes awaking with increased fury, she produces horrors that constitute a degree of wretchedness, in comparison of which all the sufferings of life do not deserve to be mentioned.

The constitution of human nature being the work of God, the three particulars which have been mentioned as parts of that constitution are parts of his government. The pleasure which accompanies one set of affections and the pain which accompanies the opposite, afford an instance in the government of God of virtue being rewarded, and of vice being punished:—the faculty which passes sentence upon human actions is a declaration from the Author of our nature of that conduct which is agreeable to Him, because it is a rule directing his creatures to pursue a certain conduct:—and the presentiment of the future consequences of our behaviour is a declaration from the Author of our nature of the manner in which his government is to proceed with regard to us. The hopes and fears natural to the human mind are the language in which God foretells to man the events in which he is deeply interested. To suppose that the Almighty engages his creatures in a certain course of action by delusive hopes and fears, is at once absurd and impious; and if we think worthily of the Supreme Being, we cannot entertain a doubt that He, who by the constitution of human nature has declared his love of virtue and his hatred of vice, will at length appear the righteous Governor of the universe.

I mentioned the state of the world as another subject

within the sphere of our observation, from which unassisted reason may discover the character of the government of God. And here also we may mark three traces of a moral government.

1. It occurs, in the first place, to consider the world as the situation in which creatures, having the constitution which has been described, are placed. Acting in the presence of men, that is, of creatures constituted as we ourselves are, and feeling a connexion with them in all the occupations of life, we experience, in the sentiments of those around us, a farther reward and punishment than that which arises from the sense of our own minds. The faculty which passes sentence upon a man's own actions, when carried forth to the actions of others, becomes a principle of esteem or contempt. The sense of good or ill desert becomes, upon the review of the conduct of others, applause or indignation. When it referred to a man's own conduct, it pointed only at what was future. When it refers to the conduct of others, it becomes an active principle, and proceeds in some measure to execute the rules which it pronounces to be just.

Hence the righteous is rewarded by the sentiments of his fellow-creatures. He experiences the gratitude of some, the friendship, at least the good-will of all. The wicked, on the other hand, is a stranger to esteem, and confidence, and love. His vices expose him to censure; his deceit renders him an object of distrust; his malice creates him enemies; according to the kind and the degree of his demerit, contempt or hatred or indignation is felt by every one who knows his character; and even when these sentiments do not lead others to do him harm, they weaken or extinguish the emotions of sympathy; so that his neighbours do not rejoice in his prosperity, and hardly weep over his misfortunes.

Thus does God employ the general sense of mankind to encourage and reward the righteous, to correct and punish the wicked; and thus has he constituted men in some sort the keepers of their brethren, the guardians of one another's virtue. The natural unperverted sentiments of the human mind with regard to character and conduct are upon the side of virtue and against vice; and the course

of the world, turning in a great measure upon these sentiments, indicates a moral government.

2. A second trace in the state of the world, of the moral government of God, is the civil government by which society subsists.

Those who are employed in the administration of civil government are not supposed to act immediately from sentiment. It is expected that, without regard to their own private emotions, they shall in every case proceed according to certain known and established laws. But these laws, so far as they go, are in general consonant to the sentiments of the human mind, and, like them, are favourable to the cause of virtue. The happiness, the existence of human government depends upon the protection and encouragement which it affords to virtue, and the punishment which it inflicts upon vice. The government of men, therefore, in its best and happiest form, is a moral government; and being a part, an instrument of the government of God, it serves to intimate to us the rule according to which his Providence operates through the general system.

3. Setting aside all consideration of the opinions of the instrumentality of man, there appear in the world evident traces of the moral government of God. Many of the consequences of men's behaviour happen without the intervention of any agent. Of this kind are the effects which their way of life has upon their health, and much of its influence upon their fortune and situation. Effects of the same nature extend to communities of men. They derive strength and stability from the truth, moderation, temperance, and public spirit of the members; whereas idleness, luxury, and turbulence, while they ruin the private fortunes of many individuals, are hurtful to the community; and the general depravity of the members is the disease and weakness of the state.

These effects do not arise from any civil institution. They are not a part of the political regulations which are made with different degrees of wisdom in different states; but they may be observed in all countries. They are part of what we commonly call the course of nature; that is, they are rewards and punishments ordained by the Lord of nature, not affected by the caprice of his subjects, and

flowing immediately from the conduct of men. There arise, indeed, from the present situation of human affairs, many obstructions to the full operation of these rewards and punishments. Yet the degree in which they actually take place is sufficient to ascertain the character of the government of God. In those cases where we are able to trace the causes which prevent the exact distribution of good and evil, we perceive that the very hindrances are wisely adapted to a present state. Even where we do not discern the reasons of their existence, we clearly perceive that these hindrances are accidental; that virtue, benign and salutary in its influences, tends to produce happiness, pure and unmixed; that vice, in its nature mischievous, tends to confusion and misery; and we cannot avoid considering these tendencies as the voice of Him who hath established the order of nature, declaring to those who observe and understand them, the future condition of the righteous and the wicked.

And thus in the world we behold, upon every hand of us, openings of a kingdom of righteousness corresponding to what we formerly traced in the constitution of human nature. By that constitution, while reward is provided for virtue, and punishment for vice, there arise in our breasts the forebodings of a higher reward and a higher punishment. So in the world, while there are manifold instances of a righteous distribution of good and evil, there is a tendency towards the completion of a scheme which is here but begun.

This view of the government of God, which we have collected from the constitution of human nature and the state of the world, is brought to light by the religion of Jesus Christ. The language of God in his works leads us to his word in the gospel. All our disquisitions concerning the nature of his government only prepare us for receiving those gracious discoveries, which, confirming every conclusion of right reason, resolving every doubt, and enlarging the imperfect views which belong to this the beginning of our existence, bring us perfect assurance that, in the course of divine government, unlimited in extent, in duration, and in power, every hindrance shall be removed, the natural consequences of action shall be allowed to

operate, virtue shall be happy, and vice shall be miserable.

Abernethy on the Attributes.

Cudworth's Intellectual System; a magazine of learning, where all the different schemes of Atheism are combated with profound erudition and close argument.

Boyle's Lectures; a collection of the ablest defences of the great truths of religion that are to be found in any language. Having been composed in a long succession of years, by men of different talents and pursuits, they furnish an abundant specimen of all the variety of argument that has ever been adduced upon the subjects of which they treat.

Butler's Analogy, the first chapters of which should be particularly studied in relation to the subjects of this discourse.

Essays on Morality and Natural Religion, by Henry Home, Lord Kaimes.

Paley's Natural Theology, the last, and perhaps the most elaborate work of this author. He had here his pioneers as well as his forerunners. But his inimitable skill in arranging and condensing his matter, his peculiar turn for what may be called "animal mechanies," the aptness and the wit of his illustrations, and occasionally the warmth and the solemnity of his devotion, which, by a happy and becoming process, was rendered more animated as he drew nearer to the close of life, stamp on this work a character more valuable than originality.

CHAP. I.

COLLATERAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY FROM HISTORY.

THE ground-work, which I suppose to be laid in an inquiry into the truth of the Christian religion, is a belief of the two great doctrines of natural religion, that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him. You consider man as led by the principles of his nature, to believe that the universe is the work of an intelligent Being, although wandering very much in his apprehensions of that Being; you consider him as feeling that the government of the Creator of the world is a righteous government, although conscious that he often transgresses the law of his Maker, and very uncertain as to the method in which the sanctions of that law are to operate with regard to him; and you propose to examine whether to man, in these circumstances, there was given an extraordinary revelation by the preaching of the Son of God, or whether Jesus Christ and his apostles were men who spoke and wrote according to their own measure of knowledge, and who, when they called themselves the messengers of God, assumed a character which did not belong to them. It is manifest at first sight, that such a revelation is extremely desirable to man; and a closer investigation of the subject may show it to be desirable in such a degree, so necessary to the comfort and improvement of man, as to create a presumption in favour of the proofs that the Father of the human race has been pleased to grant it. But the necessity of the revelation is a subject upon which, in my opinion, it is better not to enter at the outset; because, if the proofs of the truth of Christianity be defective, the presumption arising from this necessity will not be sufficient to help them out; and if they be clear and conclu-

sive, the necessity of revelation will be more manifest after you proceed to examine its nature and effects.

The truth of Christianity turns upon a question of fact, which, like every other question of the same kind, ought to be judged of calmly and impartially—not by the wishes which it may be natural to form on the subject, but by the evidence which is adduced in support of the fact. We allow the great body of the people to retain all the early prejudices which they happily acquire on the side of Christianity. We allow its full weight to every consideration which is level to their capacity, and which corresponds to their habits; because, what we wish to impress upon them is a practical belief of the truth of religion; and this practical belief may be sufficient to direct their conduct and to establish their hope, although it be not grounded upon critical inquiries and logical deductions. But it is expected that the teachers of religion should be able to defend the citadel in which they are placed, against the attack of every enemy, and that they should be acquainted with the quarters which are most likely to be attacked, with the nature of the blow that is to be aimed, and the most successful method of warding it off. With them, therefore, belief ought to be not merely the result of early habit, but a conviction founded upon a close examination of evidence; and in this, as in every other inquiry, they ought to take the fair and safe method of arriving at the truth, by bringing to the search after it a mind unembarrassed with any prepossession.

A person who, in this state of mind, begins to examine the question of fact upon which the deistical controversy turns, will be struck with that support which the truth of Christianity receives from the whole truth of history for more than 1700 years. The impartial historians of those times, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, in passages* which have been often quoted and commented upon, and the exact amount of which every student of divinity ought to know, concur with Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, the learned, inveterate, and inquisitive adversaries of the Christian faith, in establishing beyond the possibility of

* Sueton. Claud. cap. 25. Sueton. Nero. cap. 16. Tacit. Ann. l. xv. 44. Plin. l. x. ep. 97.

doubt the following leading facts;—that Jesus Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death; that this man, during his life, founded, and his followers, after his death, supported a sect, upon the reputation of performing miracles; and that this sect spread quickly, and became very numerous in different parts of the Roman empire. A succession of Christian writers is extant, some of whom lived near enough the event to be witnesses of it, and all of whom published books, which must have appeared absurd to their contemporaries, if the facts upon which these books proceeded had then been known to be false. A chain of tradition can be shown, by which the principal facts were transmitted into the Christian church. The existence of our religion can be traced back to the time and place to which the beginning of it is referred; and since that time, by the institution of a Gospel ministry, by the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and by the observance of the Lord's day, there have continued, in many parts of the world, standing memorials of the preaching, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

I begin with mentioning these things, because every literary man will perceive the advantage of taking possession of this strong ground. By placing his foot here he is furnished with a kind of extrinsical evidence, the force of which none will deny, which cannot be said to create any unreasonable prepossession, and yet which prepares the mind for the less remote proofs of a Divine revelation.

Grotius de Veritate Rel. Chris.
Macknight on the Truth of the Gospel History.
Addison's Evidences.
Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History.

CHAP. II.

AUTHENTICITY AND GENUINENESS OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE whole of that revelation which is peculiar to Christians is contained in the books of the New Testament; and, therefore, it appears to me, that before we begin to judge of the divine mission or inspiration of the persons to whom these books are ascribed, we ought to satisfy ourselves that the books themselves are authentic and genuine. For even although the apostles of Jesus did really receive a commission from the Son of God, yet if the books which bear their names were not written by them, or if they have been corrupted as to their substance and import since they were written, that is, if the books are not both authentic and genuine, we may be very much misled by trusting to them notwithstanding the divine mission of their supposed authors. I oppose the word authentic to supposititious; the word genuine to vitiated; I call a book authentic which was truly the work of the person whose name it bears; I call a book genuine which remains in all material points the same as when it proceeded from the author. Upon these two points, the authenticity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament, I am at present to fix your attention. Both the subjects open a wide field, and have received much discussion. All that I can do is to mark to you the leading circumstances which have been discussed, and with regard to which it becomes you to inform and satisfy your minds.

1. The canon of the New Testament is the collection of books written by the apostles or by persons under their direction, and received by Christians as of divine authority. This canon was not formed by any General Council, who claimed a power of deciding in this matter for the Chris-

tian Church; but it continued to grow during all the age of the apostles, and it received frequent accessions, as the different books came to be generally recognised. It was many years after the ascension of Jesus before any of the books of the New Testament were written. The apostles were at first entirely occupied with the labours and perils which they encountered in executing their commission to preach the Gospel to all nations. They found neither leisure nor occasion to write, till Christian societies were formed; and all their writings were suggested by particular circumstances which occurred in the progress of Christianity. Some of the Epistles to the Churches were the earliest of their writings. Every Epistle was received upon unquestionable evidence by the Church to which it was sent, and in whose keeping the original manuscript remained. Copies were circulated first among the neighbouring churches, and went from them to Christian societies at a greater distance, till, by degrees, the whole Christian world, considering the superscription of the Epistle, and the manner in which it came to them, as a token of its authenticity, and relying upon the original, which they knew where to find, gave entire credit to its being the work of him whose name it bore. This is the history of the thirteen Epistles which bear the name of the apostle Paul, and of the First Epistle of Peter. Some of the other Epistles, which had not the same particular superscription, were not so easily authenticated to the whole Church, and were, upon that account, longer of being admitted into the canon.

The Gospels were written by different persons, for different purposes; and those Christian societies, upon whose account they were originally composed, communicated them to others. The book of Acts went along with the Gospel of Luke, as a second part composed by the same author. The four Gospels, the book of Acts, and the fourteen epistles which I mentioned, very early after their publication, were known and received by the followers of Jesus in every part of the world. References are made to them by the first Christian writers; and they have been handed down, by an uninterrupted tradition, from the days in which they appeared, to our time. Polycarp was the disciple of the Apostle John; Irenæus was the disciple of Polycarp; and of the works of Irenæus a great part is ex-

tant, in which he quotes most of the books of the New Testament, and mentions the number of the Gospels, and the names of many of the Epistles. Origen in the third century, Eusebius and Jerome in the fourth, give us, in their voluminous works, catalogues of the books of the New Testament which coincide with ours, relate fully the history of the authors of the several books, with the occasion upon which they wrote, and make large quotations from them. In the course of the first four centuries, the greater part of the New Testament was transcribed in the writings of the Christians, and many particular passages were quoted and referred to by Celsus and Julian, in their attacks upon Christianity. From the beginning of the Church, throughout the whole Christian world, the books of the New Testaments were publicly read and explained to the people in their assemblies for divine worship; and they were continually appealed to by Christian writers as the standard of faith, and the supreme judge in controversy. The Christian world was very far from being prone to receive every book which claimed inspiration. Although many were circulated under respectable names, none were ever admitted by the whole Church, or quoted by Christian writers as of divine authority, except those which we now receive. And it was very long before some of them were universally acknowledged. When you come to examine the subject particularly, you will find that we stand upon ground which we are fully able to defend, when we admit the Epistle to the Hebrews, the smaller Epistles, and the book of Revelation, as of equal authority with any other part of the New Testament. At the same time, the hesitation which, for several ages, was entertained in some places of the Christian world with regard to these books, is satisfying to a candid mind, because this hesitation is of itself a strong presumption, that the universal and cordial reception, which was given to all the other books of the New Testament, proceeded upon clear incontestable evidence of their authenticity.

If, then, we readily receive, upon the authority of tradition, the History of Thucydides, the Orations of Cicero, the Dialogues of Plato, as really the composition of these immortal authors, we have much more reason to give credit to the explicit testimony which the judgment of con-

temporaries, and the acknowledgment of succeeding ages, have borne to the writers of the New Testament. There is not any ancient book with regard to which the external evidence of authenticity is so full and so various; and this variety of external evidence is confirmed to every person who is capable of judging, by the most striking internal marks of authenticity,—by numberless instances of agreement with the history of those times, which are most satisfying when they appear to be most trivial, because they form altogether a continued coincidence in points where it could not well have been studied; a coincidence which, the more that any one is versant in the manners, the geography, and the constitution of ancient times, will bring the more entire conviction to his mind, that these books must have been written by persons living in the very country, and at the very period to which we refer those who are accounted the authors of them. Undesigned coincidences between the Acts and the Epistles are pointed out with admirable taste and judgment in Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, which is perhaps the most cogent and convincing specimen of moral argumentation in the world; and in the first volume of his Evidences of Christianity,—which are professedly a compilation, but so condensed and compacted, so illuminated and enforced, that it is impossible not to admire the matchless powers of the compiler's genius in turning the patient drudgery of Lardner to such account,—the authenticity of the Gospels and Acts is established.

2. Having ascertained to your own satisfaction the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, you will next proceed to inquire whether they are genuine, that is, uncorrupted. For even although they proceeded at first from the apostles or evangelists whose names they bear, they may have been so altered since that time as to convey to us very false information with regard to their original contents. It does not become you to rest in the presumption that the providence of God, if it gave a revelation, would certainly guard so precious a gift, and transmit entire through all ages "the faith once delivered to the saints."* The analogy of nature does not support this

* Jude v. 3.

presumption; for the best blessings of heaven are abused by the vices or the negligence of those upon whom they are bestowed; and succeeding generations often suffer in their domestic, political, and religious interests, by abuses of which their predecessors were guilty. It becomes a divine to know, that the manuscripts of the New Testament, which were originally deposited with the Christian societies, no longer exist; that there have been the same ignorance, haste, and inaccuracy in transcribing the Gospels and Epistles, as in transcribing all other books; and that the various readings arising from these or other sources were very early observed. Origen speaks of them in the third century. They multiplied exceedingly, as was to be expected from the nature of the thing, after his time, when the copies of the original MSS. became more numerous and more widely diffused; so that Mill, in his splendid and valuable edition of the Greek Testament, has numbered 30,000 various readings.

This has been a subject of much declamation and triumph to the enemies of our Christian faith. Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Collins, Toland, Tindal, and many other deistical writers in the beginning of the last century, boasted that Christians are not in possession of a sure standard; and they built, upon the supposed corruption of the Greek text, an argument for the superiority of the light of nature above that uncertain instruction which varies continually as it passes through the hands of men. A scholar must be aware of this difficulty, and prepared to meet it.

When you come to estimate the amount of the 30,000 various readings, you will find that almost all of them are trifling changes upon letters and syllables, and that there is hardly one instance in which they affect the great doctrines of our religion. It will give you much satisfaction to observe, that the different sects into which the Christian church was early divided, watched one another; that any great alteration of a book which, soon after its being published, had been sent over the whole world, was impossible; that even those who corrupted Christianity have preserved the Scriptures so entire, as to transmit a full refutation of their own errors; and that from the most vitiated copies the one faith and hope of Christians may be

learned. Still, however, it is desirable that these various readings should be corrected, and it is proper that you should have a general acquaintance with the sources from which the correction of them is to be derived. These sources are four. 1. The MSS. of the New Testament which abound in Germany, France, Italy, England, and other countries of Europe. I mean MSS. written long before printing was in use, some of which, particularly Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus, are referred to one or other of the three first centuries of the Christian era. 2. The ancient versions of the New Testament, which having been made in early times from copies much nearer the original MSS. than any that we have, may be considered as in some degree vouchers of the contents of those MSS. The most respectable of the ancient versions is the old Italic, which, we have reason to believe, was made in the first century for the benefit of those Christians in the Roman empire who understood the Latin better than any other language. It has, indeed, undergone many alterations; but so far as it can be recovered in its most ancient form, it is the surest guide, in doubtful places, to that which was the original reading. 3. A third source of correction is found in the numberless quotations from the New Testament with which the works of the Christian fathers and other early writers abound. Had they always copied exactly from books lying before them, the extent of their quotations would have rendered them as certain guides to the genuine reading, as they are unquestionable witnesses of the authenticity. But it cannot be denied, that as the books of the New Testament were perfectly familiar to them, they have often quoted from memory, and that being more careful to give the sense than the words, they differ from one another in some trivial respects, when quoting the same passage, so that their quotations cannot be applied indiscriminately to ascertain the original. 4. The last source of correction is sound chastised criticism, which, joined to the sagacious use of the most ancient MSS., versions, and quotations, cautious but skilful conjecture, determines which of the various readings is to be preferred, upon principles so clearly established, and so accurately applied, as to leave no hesitation in the mind of any scholar. The canons of scripture criticism have

been investigated and digested by many learned men. You will find collections of them in the Prolegomena to the larger editions of the Greek Testament. They are frequently applied by the later commentators, and they are the introduction to a kind of learning which, although it is apt, when prosecuted too far, to lead to what is minute and frivolous, yet is in many respects so essential that it does not become any one who professes to interpret the Scriptures to others to be entirely a stranger to it.

Superficial reasoners may think it strange that so much discussion should be necessary to ascertain the true reading of the oracles of God; and in their haste they may pronounce, that it would have been more becoming the great purpose for which these oracles were given, more kind and more useful to man, that the originals should have been saved from destruction; and that if the great extent of the Christian society rendered it impossible for every one to have access to them, the all-ruling providence of God should have preserved every copy that was taken from every kind of vitiation. They who thus judge, forget that there is no part of the works of creation, of the ways of Providence, or of the dispensation of grace, in which the Almighty has done precisely that which we would have dictated to him, had he admitted us to be his counsellors, although we are generally able, by considering what he has done, to discover that his plan is more perfect and more universally useful, than that which our narrow views might have suggested as best. They forget the extent of the miracle which they ask, when they demand, that all who ever were employed in copying the New Testament should at all times have been effectually guarded by the Spirit of God from negligence, and that their works should have been kept safe from the injuries of time. And they forget, in the last place, that the very circumstance to which they object has, in the wisdom of God, been highly favourable to the cause of truth. The infidel has enjoyed his triumph, and has exposed his ignorance. Men of erudition have been encouraged to apply their talents to a subject, which opens so large a field for the exercise of them. Their research and their discoveries have demonstrated the futility of the objection, and have shown that the great body of the people in every country, who are in-

capable of such research, may safely rest in the Scriptures as they are; and that the most scrupulous critics, by the inexhaustible sources of correction which lie open to them, may attain nearer to an absolute certainty with regard to the true reading of the books of the New Testament, than of any other ancient book in any language. If they require more, their demand is unreasonable; for the religion of Jesus does not profess to satisfy the careless, or to overpower the obstinate, but rests its pretensions upon evidence sufficient to bring conviction to those who with honest hearts inquire after the truth, and are willing to exercise their reason in attempting to discover it.

Griesbach, professor at Jena, in Saxony, published in 1796, the first volume of his second edition of the Greek Testament, containing the four Gospels; and in 1806, the second volume, containing the other books of the New Testament. He availed himself of the materials which sacred criticism had been collecting from the time of the publication of Mill's edition. And, adverting to all the manuscript quotations and versions which the research of a number of theological writers, in different parts of the world, had brought into view, he went farther than the former editors of the New Testament had done. They adhered to what is called the *textus receptus*, which had been established in the Elzevir edition of the Greek Testament in 1624, which is very much the same with that of the editions of Beza and Erasmus, and which is now in daily use. They only collected various readings from manuscripts, versions, and quotations, introduced them in a preface or notes, and explained in large and learned prolegomena, the degree of credit that was due to them; thus furnishing materials for a more correct edition of the Greek Testament, and unfolding the principles upon which these materials ought to be applied. But Griesbach proceeded himself to apply the materials, by introducing emendations into the text. This he is said by Dr. Marsh, late Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and now Bishop of Peterbro', to have done with unremitted diligence, with extreme caution, and with scrupulous integrity. His emendations never rest merely upon conjecture, but always upon authority which appeared to him decisive. They are printed in a smaller character than the rest of the text, or in some clear way distinguished from the received text: and when he was in any doubt, they are not introduced, but remain in the notes or margin. I have great satisfaction in saying, that in so far as I have examined Griesbach's New Testament, it does not appear to differ in any material respect from the received text; so that all the industry and erudition of this laborious and accurate editor serve to establish this most comfortable doctrine, that the books of the New Testament are genuine. c Dr. Marsh says, that

Griesbach's edition is so correct, and the prolegomena, or critical apparatus annexed to it, so full and learned, that there will be no occasion for a different edition of the Greek Testament during the life of the youngest of us. I quote Dr. Marsh, because in that portion of his lectures which has been published, he gives the most minute and ample information concerning all the editions of the Greek Testament. He mentions repeatedly, with due honour, Dr. Gerard's Institutes of Biblical Criticism, to which I refer you.

Marsh's Lectures, and his translations of Michaelis's Introductions.

Macknight's Preliminary Discourses in his Commentary on the Epistles.

Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, and Supplement to it.

Leland.

Jortin.

Hartley in vol. 5th of Watson's Theological Tracts.

Prettyman's Institutes.

Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, and Evidences of Christianity.

CHAP. III.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE leading characteristical assertion in the books of the New Testament is, that they contain a divine revelation. Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;"* and when he gave his apostles a commission to preach his gospel, he used these words, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."† "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth him that sent me."‡ This is the highest claim which any mortal can advance. It holds forth the man who makes it under the most dignified character; and, if it be well founded, it involves consequences the most interesting to those who hear him. Such a claim is not to be carelessly admitted. The grounds upon which it rests ought to be closely scrutinized; and reason cannot have a more important or honourable office than in trying its pretensions by a fair standard.

As every circumstance respecting those who advanced such a claim merits attention, the first thing which presents itself to a rational inquirer, is the manner in which the claim is made, and the state of mind which those who make it discover in their conduct, in the general style of their writings, or in particular expressions. Now, if you set yourselves to collect all the characters of enthusiasm, either from the writings of those profound moralists who have analysed and discriminated the various features of the human mind, or from the behaviour of those who, in different ages, have mistaken the fancies of a distempered brain for the inspiration of heaven, you will find the most marked opposition between these characters and the appearance which the books of the New Testament present. Instead

* John vii. 16. † John xx. 21. ‡ Luke x. 16.

of the general, indistinct, inconsistent ravings of enthusiasm, you find in these writings discourses full of sound sense and manly eloquence, connected reasonings, apposite illustrations, a multitude of particular facts, a continual reference to common life, and the same useful instructive views preserved throughout. Instead of the gloom of enthusiasm, you find a spirit of cheerfulness, a disposition to associate, an accommodation to prejudices and opinions. Instead of credulity and vehement passion, you observe in the writers of these books a slowness of heart to believe, a hesitation in the midst of evidence, perfect possession of their faculties, with calm sedate manners. Instead of the self-conceit, the turgid insolent tone of enthusiasm, you find in them a reserve, a modesty, a simplicity of expression, a disparagement of their own peculiar gifts, and a constant endeavour to magnify, in the eyes of their followers, those virtues in which they themselves did not pretend to have any pre-eminence. The claim which they advance sits so easy and natural upon them, that the most critical eye cannot discern any trace of that kind of delusion which has often been exposed to public view; and they are so unlike any enthusiasts whom the world ever saw, that, as far as outward appearances are to be trusted, they "speak the words of truth and soberness."*

But you will not trust to appearances. It becomes you to examine the words which they speak, and you are in possession of a standard by which these words should be tried, and without a conformity to which they cannot be received as divine. Reason and conscience are the primary revelation which God made to man. We know assuredly that they came from the Author of nature, and our apprehensions of his perfections must indeed be very low, if we can suppose it possible that they should be contradicted by a subsequent revelation. If any system, therefore, which pretends to come from God, contain palpable absurdities, or if it enjoin actions repugnant to the moral feelings of our nature, it never can approve itself to our understandings. It is unnecessary to examine the evidences of its being divine, because no evidence can be so

* Acts xxvi. 25.

strong as our perception of the falsehood of that which is absurd, and of the inconsistency between the will of God and that which is immoral. When I say that a divine revelation cannot contain a palpable absurdity, I am far from meaning, that every thing contained in it must be plain and familiar, such as reason is already versant with. The revelation, in that case, would be unnecessary. Neither do I mean that every thing contained in it, although new, must be such as we are able fully to comprehend; for many insuperable difficulties occur in the study of nature. We have daily experience, that our ignorance of the manner in which a thing exists, does not create any doubt of its existence; and in the ordinary business of life, we admit, without hesitation, the truth of facts which, at the time we admit them, are to us unaccountable. The presumption is, that if a revelation be given it will contain more facts of the same kind; and it addresses you as reasonable creatures, if it require you, in judging of the facts which it proposes to your belief, to follow out the same principles upon which you are accustomed to proceed with regard to the facts which you see or hear. If the books of the New Testament be tried with this caution by the standard of reason, they will not be found to contain any of that contradiction which might entitle you to reject them before you examine their evidence. There are doctrines to the full apprehension of which our limited faculties are inadequate; and there has been much perplexity and misapprehension in the presumptuous attempts to explain these doctrines. But the manner in which the books themselves state the doctrines, cannot appear to any philosophical mind to involve an absurdity. The system of religion and morality which they deliver is every way worthy of God. It corresponds to all the discoveries which the most enlightened reason has made with regard to the nature and the will of God; and it comprehends all the duties which are dictated by conscience or clearly suggested by the love of order. The few objections which have been made to the morality of the gospel, as being defective in some points, by not enjoining patriotism or friendship, or too rigorous in others, admit of so clear and so easy a solution, that nothing but the desire of finding fault, joined to the

difficulty of discovering any exceptionable circumstance, could have drawn remarks so frivolous from the authors in whose works they appear.

You may, then, without much trouble, satisfy yourselves that neither the manner in which the writers of the New Testament advance their claim, nor the contents of their books, afford any reason for rejecting that claim instantly, without examining the evidence. I do not say that this affords any proof of a divine revelation; for a system may be rational and moral without being divine. This is only a pre-requisite, which every person to whom a system is proposed under that character has a title to demand. But we state the matter very imperfectly when we say, that there is nothing in the manner or the contents of these books which deserves an immediate rejection. A closer attention to the subject not only renders it clear that they may come from God, but suggests many strong presumptions that they cannot be the work of men. These presumptions make up what is called the internal evidence of Christianity.

The *first* branch of this internal evidence is the manifest superiority of that system of religion and morality which is contained in the books of the New Testament, above any that was ever delivered to the world before. Here a Christian divine derives a most important advantage from an intimate acquaintance with the ancient heathen philosophers. He ought not to take upon trust the accounts of their discoveries which succeeding writers have copied from one another. But setting that which they taught, over against the discourses of Jesus Christ, and the writings of his apostles, he ought to see with his own eyes the force of that argument which arises from the comparison. Do not think yourselves obliged to disparage the writings of the heathen moralists. The effort which they made to raise their minds above the grovelling superstition in which they were born was honourable to themselves; it was useful to their disciples, and it scattered some rays of light through the world. It does not become a scholar, who is daily reaping instruction and entertainment from their works, to deny them any part of that applause which is their due; and it is not necessary for a Christian. You may safely allow that they were very much superior in the

knowledge of religion and morality to their countrymen; and yet, when you take those philosophers who lived before the Christian era, and compare their writings with the books of the New Testament, the disparity appears most striking. The views of God given in these books not only are more sublime than those which occasional passages in the writings of the philosophers discover, but are purified from the alloy which abounds in them, and are at once consistent with, and apposite to, the condition of man. Religion is here uniformly applied to encourage man in the discharge of his duty, to support him under the trials of life, and to cherish every good affection. To love God with all our heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, the two commandments of the gospel, are the most luminous and comprehensive principles of morality that ever were taught. The particular precepts, which, although not systematically deduced, are but the unfolding of these principles, form the heart, regulate the conduct, descend into every relation, and constitute the most perfect and refined morality,—a morality not only elevated above the concerns or occasions of ordinary men, but sound and practical, which renders the members of society useful, agreeable, and respectable, and at the same time carries them forward by the progressive improvement of their nature to a higher state of being. The precepts themselves are short, expressive, and simple, easily retained, and easily applied; and they are enforced by all those motives which have the greatest power over the human mind. That future life, to which good men in every age had looked forward with an anxious wish, is brought to light in these books. There is not in them the conjecture, the hesitation, the embarrassment which had entered into the language of the wisest philosophers upon this subject. But there is an explicit declaration, delivered in a tone of authority which becomes that Being who can order the condition of his creatures, that this is a season of trial, that there will hereafter be a time of recompense, and that the conduct of men upon earth is to produce everlasting consequences with regard to their future condition. To the fears, of which a being who is conscious of repeated transgressions cannot divest himself, no other system had applied any remedy but the repetition of un-

availing sacrifices. These books alone disclose a scheme of Providence adapted to the condition of sinners, announced, introduced, and conducted with a solemnity corresponding to its importance, admirably fitted in all its parts, supposing it to be true, to revive the hopes of the penitent, to restore the dignity, the purity, and happiness of the intelligent creation, and thus to repair that degeneracy which all writers have lamented, of which every man has experience, and to the cure of which all human means had proved inadequate. This grand idea, which is characteristical of the books of the New Testament, completes their superiority above every other system, and gives a peculiar kind of sublimity to both the religion and the morality of the gospel.

The *second* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the condition of those men in whose writings this superior system appears. We can trace a progress in ancient philosophy; we see the principles of science arising out of the occupations of men, collected, improved, abused; and we can mark the effect which both the improvement and the abuse had in producing that degree of perfection which they attained. To every person versant in the history of ancient philosophy, Socrates must appear an extraordinary man. Yet the eminence of Socrates forms only a stage in the progress of his countrymen. His disciples, who have recorded his discourses, were men placed in a most favourable situation for polishing and enlarging their minds; and the Roman philosophers trode in their steps. But, if the books of the New Testament be authentic, the writers who have delivered to us this superior system, were men born in a mean condition, without any advantages of education, and with strong national prejudices, which the low habits formed by their occupations could not fail to strengthen. They have interwoven in their works their history and their manner of thinking. The obscurity of their station is vouched by contemporary writers, and it was one of the reproaches thrown upon the Gospel by its earliest adversaries. Yet the conceptions of these mean men upon the most important subjects, far transcend the continued efforts of ancient philosophy; and the sages of Greece and Rome appear as children when compared with the fishermen of Galilee.

From men, whose minds we cannot suppose to have been seasoned with any other notions of divine things than those which they derived from the teaching of the Pharisees, who had obscured the law by their traditions, and loaded it with ceremonies, there arose a pure and spiritual religion. From men, educated in the narrowness and bigotry of the Jewish spirit, there arose a religion which enjoins universal benevolence, a scheme for diffusing the knowledge of the true God over the whole earth, and forming a church out of all the nations under heaven. The divine plan of blessing the human race, in turning them from their iniquity, originated from a little district,—was adopted, not by the whole tribe as a method of retrieving their ancient honours, but by a few individuals in opposition to public authority,—and was prosecuted with zeal and activity under every disadvantage and discouragement. When his contemporaries heard Jesus speak, they said, "Whence hath this man wisdom? How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"* When the Jewish council heard Peter and John, they marvelled, because they knew that they were ignorant and unlearned men ;† and to every candid inquirer, the superiority of that system, and the magnificence of that plan contained in the books of the New Testament, when compared with the natural opportunities of those from whom they proceeded, must appear the most inexplicable phenomenon in the history of the human mind, unless we admit the truth of their claim.

A *third* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the character of Jesus Christ. It is often said with much truth, that the Gospel has the peculiar excellence of proposing in the character of its author an example of all its precepts. That character may also be stated as one branch of the internal evidence of Christianity, whether you consider Jesus as a teacher, or as a man. His manner of teaching was most dignified and most winning. "Never man spake like this man." He taught by parable, by action, and by plain discourse. Out of familiar scenes, out of the objects which surrounded him, and the intercourse of social life, he extracted the most pleasing

* Matt. xiii. 54. John vii. 15. † Acts iv. 13.

and useful instruction. He repelled the attacks of his enemies with a gentleness which disarmed, and a wisdom which confounded their malice. There was a plainness, yet a depth in all his sayings. He was tender, persuasive, or severe, according to circumstances; and the discourse, which seemed to have been dictated to him merely by the occasion, is found to convey lasting and valuable counsel to posterity. His character as a man, is allowed to be the most perfect which the world ever saw. All the virtues of which we can form a conception, were united in him with a more exact harmony, and shone with a lustre more bright and more natural, than in any of the sons of men. His descending from the glories of heaven, assuming the weakness of human nature, and voluntarily submitting to all the calamities which he endured for the sake of men, exhibits a degree of benevolence, magnanimity, and patience, which far exceeds the conception that Plato formed of the most tried and perfect virtue. The majesty of his divine nature is blended with the fellow-feeling and condescension implied in his office; and although the history of mankind did not afford any model that could here be followed, this singular character is supported throughout, and there is not any one of the words or actions ascribed to *him, which* does not appear to the most correct taste to become the man Christ Jesus. It is not possible that a manner of teaching, so infinitely superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or that a character so extraordinary, so godlike, so consistent, could have been invented by the fishermen of Galilee. Admit only that the books of the New Testament are authentic, and you must allow that the authors of them drew Jesus Christ from the life. And how do they draw him? Not in the language of fiction, with swoln panegyric, with a laborious effort to number his deeds, and to record all his sayings, but in the most natural artless manner. Four of his disciples, not many years after his death, when every circumstance could easily be investigated, write a short history of his life. Without attempting to exhaust the subject, without studying to coincide with one another, without directing your attention to the shining parts of his history, or marking any contrast between him and other men, they leave you, from a few facts, to gather the character of the man whom they had fol-

lowed. Thus you learn his innocence not from their protestations, but from the whole complexion of his life, from the declaration of the judge who condemned him; of the centurion who attended his execution; of a traitor, who, having been admitted into his family, was a witness of his most retired actions, who had no tie of affection, of delicacy, or consistency, to restrain him from divulging the whole truth, and who might have pleaded the secret wickedness of his master as an apology for his own baseness, who would have been amply repaid for his information, and yet who died with these words in his mouth, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."* Had Judas borne no such testimony, an appeal to him was the most unsafe method in which the writers of this history could attest the innocence of their master. But if the wisdom of God had ordained, that even in the family of Jesus the wrath of his enemies should thus praise him, it was most natural for one of the evangelists to record so striking a circumstance: and I mention it here, only as a specimen of the manner in which the character of Jesus is drawn, not by the colouring of a skilful pencil, but by a continual reference to facts, which to impostors are of difficult invention, and of easy detection, but which, to those who exhibit a real character, are the most natural, the most delightful, and the most effectual method of making their friend known. "Shall we say," writes Rousseau, no uniform champion for the cause of Christianity, "shall we say that the history of the gospel is invented at pleasure? No. It is not thus that men invent. It would be more inconceivable that a number of men had in concert produced this book from their own imaginations, than it is that one man has furnished the subject of it. The morality of the gospel, and its general tone, were beyond the conception of Jewish authors; and the history of Jesus Christ has marks of truth so palpable, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would excite our admiration more than its hero."†

A *fourth* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the characters of the apostles of Jesus as drawn

* Matt. xxvii. 4. † Rousseau, Emile, ii. 98.

in their own writings. Their condition renders the superiority of their doctrine inexplicable, without admitting a divine revelation: their character gives the highest credibility to their pretensions. We seldom read the work of any person, without forming some apprehension of his character; and if his work represent him as engaged in a succession of trials, pouring forth the sentiments of his heart, and holding, in interesting situations, much intercourse with his fellow-creatures, we contract an intimate acquaintance with him before we are done, and we are able to collect from numberless circumstances, whether he be at pains to disguise himself from us, or whether he be really such a man as he wishes to appear. No scene ever was more interesting to the actors, than that in which the writings of the apostles of Jesus exhibit them; and the gospels and epistles taken together, afford to every attentive reader a complete display of their character. We said, that they appear from their writings devoid of enthusiasm, cool and collected. Yet this coolness is removed at the greatest distance from every mark of imposture. They are at no pains to disguise their infirmities; all their prejudices shine through their narration; and they do not assume to themselves any merit for having abandoned them. We see light opening slowly upon their minds, their *hopes* disappointed, and themselves conducted into scenes very different from those which they had figured. "We trusted," said they, after the death of their master, "that it was he which should have redeemed Israel."* Yet it is not long before they become firm, and cheerful, and resolute. Not overawed by the threatenings of the magistrates, nor shaken by the persecutions which they endured from their countrymen, they devoted their lives to the generous undertaking of spreading through the world the knowledge of that religion which they had embraced. Appearing as the servants of another, they disclaim the honours which their followers were disposed to pay them; they uniformly inculcate quiet inoffensive manners, and a submission to civil authority; and labouring with their hands for the supply of their necessities, they stand forth as patterns of humility and self-denial. The

* Luke xxiv. 21.

churches to which they write are the witnesses to posterity of their holy, unblameable conduct; their sincerity and zeal breathe through all their epistles; and, when you read their writings, you behold the most illustrious example of disinterested beneficence, that exalted love of mankind, which made them forego every private consideration, in order to promote the virtue and happiness of those to whom they were sent. They had differences amongst themselves, which they are at no pains to conceal; yet they remained united in the same cause. They had personal enemies in the churches which they planted; yet they were not afraid to reprove, to censure, to excommunicate; and, in the immediate prospect of death, they continued their labour of love.

Such is the character of the apostles of Jesus, as it appears in their authentic writings, not drawn by themselves, but collected from the facts which they relate, and the letters which they address to those who knew them. It is a character so far raised above the ordinary exertions of mortals, and so diametrically opposite to the Jewish spirit, that we naturally search for some divine cause of its being formed. We are led to consider its existence as a pledge of the truth of that high claim which such men appear not unworthy to make; and this assurance of their veracity which we derive from their conduct, disposes our minds to attend to that external evidence which they offer to adduce.

I have thus stated what appear to me the principal parts of the internal evidence of Christianity. I have not mentioned the style or composition of the books of the New Testament, because although I am of opinion that there are in them instances of sublimity, of tenderness, and of manly eloquence, which are not to be equalled by any human composition, and although the mixture of dignity and simplicity which characterises these books is most worthy of the author and the subject of them, yet this is a matter of taste, a kind of sentimental proof which will not reach the understandings of all, and where an affirmation may be answered by a denial. The only evidence which Mahomet adduced for his divine mission, was the inimitable excellence of his Koran. Produce me, said he, a single chapter equal to this book, and I renounce

my claim. We are not driven to this necessity; and therefore, although every person of true taste reads with the highest admiration many parts of the New Testament, although every divine ought to cultivate a taste for the sacred classics, and has often occasion to illustrate their beauties, it is better to rest the evidence of our religion upon arguments less controvertible. Neither have I mentioned that inward conviction which the excellence of the matter, the grace of the promises, and the awfulness of the threatenings, produce on every mind disposed by the influence of heaven to receive the truth. This is the witness of the Spirit, the highest and most satisfying evidence of divine revelation; the gift of God, for which we pray, and which every one who asks with a good and honest heart is encouraged to expect. But this witness within ourselves, although it removes every shadow of doubt from our own breasts, cannot be stated to others. They are to be convinced, not by our feelings but by their own; and the truth of that fact, upon which the Deistical controversy turns, must be established by arguments which every understanding may apprehend, and with regard to which the experience of one man cannot be opposed to the experience of another. Of this kind are the points which I have stated; the superior excellence of that system contained in the books of the New Testament, taken in conjunction with the condition of those whom we know to be the authors of them, the character of Jesus Christ, as drawn by his disciples, and their own character as it appears from their writings. I do not say that these arguments will have equal force with all; but I say that they are fitted by their nature to make an impression upon every understanding which considers them with attention and candour. I allow that they form only a presumptive evidence for the high claim advanced in these books; and I consider the external evidence of Christianity as absolutely necessary to establish our faith. But I have called your attention particularly to the various branches of this internal evidence, not only because the result of the four taken together appears to me to form a very strong presumption, but also because they constitute a principal part of the study of a divine. By dwelling upon these branches —by reading with care the many excellent books which

treat of them,—and, above all, by searching the Scriptures with a special view to perceive the force of this internal evidence, your sense of the excellence of Christianity is confirmed; your hearts are made better, and you acquire the most useful furniture for those public ministrations in which it will be more your business to confirm them that believe, than to convince the gainsayers. The several points which I have stated perpetually recur in our discourses to the people; our lectures and our sermons are full of them; and therefore, the more extensive and various our information is with regard to these points, and the deeper the impression which the frequent contemplation of them has made upon our own minds, we are the better able to magnify, in the eyes of those for whose sakes we labour, the unsearchable riches of the Gospel, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

Newcome on the Character of our Saviour.
Leechman's Sermons.
Conybeare's Answer to Tindal.
Leland on the Advantages of the Christian Revelation.
Leland's View of the Deistical Writers.
Duchal's Sermons.
Jenyns on the Internal Evidences of Christianity.
Macknight on the Truth of the Gospel History.
Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Vol. II.
Bishop Porteus' Summary of the Evidences of Christianity.

CHAP. IV.

DIRECT OR EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING satisfied your minds that the books of the New Testament are authentic and genuine, that they contain nothing upon account of which they deserve immediately to be rejected, and that their contents afford a very strong presumption of their being what they profess to be,—a revelation from God to man, it is natural next to inquire what is the direct evidence in support of this presumption; for, in a matter of such infinite importance, it is not desirable to rest entirely upon presumptions: and it is not to be supposed that the strongest evidence which the nature of the case admits will be withheld. The Gospel professes to offer such evidence; and our Lord distinguishes most accurately between the amount of that presumptive evidence which arises from the excellence of Christianity, and the force of that direct proof which he brought. Of the presumptive evidence he thus speaks: "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."* *i. e.* Every man of an honest mind will infer from the nature of my doctrine, that it is of Divine origin. But of the direct proof he says: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works."† To the direct proof he constantly appeals: "The works which the Father hath given me to do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."‡ He declares that the same works which he did, and greater than them, should his servants do:§ And what these works

* John vii. 17. † John xv. 24; x, 37, 38. ‡ John v. 36.
§ John xiv. 12.

are, we learn from his answer to the disciples of John the Baptist, who brought to him this question, "Art thou he that should come?" "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."* The Gospel then professes to be received as a divine revelation upon the footing of miracles; and, therefore, every person who examines into the truth of our religion, ought to have a clear apprehension of the nature of that claim.

That I may not pass hurriedly over so important a subject, I have been led to divide my discourse upon miracles into three parts: in the first of which I shall state the force of that argument for the truth of Christianity which arises from the miracles of Jesus recorded in the New Testament.

SECTION I.

ALL that we know of the Almighty is gathered from his works. He speaks to us by the effects which he produces; and the signatures of power, wisdom, and goodness, which appear in the objects around us, are the language in which God teaches man the knowledge of himself. From these objects we learn the providence as well as the existence of God; because, while the objects are in themselves great and stupendous, many of them appear to us in motion, and, through the whole of nature, we observe operations which indicate not only the original exertions, but also the continued agency of a supreme invisible power. These operations are not desultory. By experience and information we are able to trace a certain regular course, according to which the Almighty exercises his power throughout the universe; and all the business of life proceeds upon the supposition of the uniformity of his operations. We are often, indeed, reminded that our experience and information are very limited. Extraordinary

* Matt. xi. 4, 5.

appearances at particular seasons astonish the nations of the earth; new powers of nature unfold themselves in the progress of our discoveries; and the accumulation of facts, collected and arranged by successive generations, serves to enlarge our conceptions of the greatness and the order of that system to which we belong. But although we do not pretend to be acquainted with the whole course of nature, yet the more that we know, we are the more confirmed in the belief that there is an established course: and every true philosopher is encouraged by the fruit of his own researches to entertain the hope, that some future age will be able to reconcile with that course appearances which his ignorance is at present unable to explain.

Although the business of life and the speculations of philosophy proceed upon the uniformity of the course of nature, yet it cannot be understood by those who believe in the existence of a Supreme Intelligent Being, that this uniformity excludes his interposition whensoever he sees meet to interpose. We use the phrase, laws of nature, to express the method in which, according to our observation, the Almighty usually operates. We call them laws, because they are independent of us, because they serve to account for the most discordant phenomena, and because the knowledge of them gives us a certain command over nature. But it would be an abuse of language to infer from their being called laws of nature, that they bind him who established them. It would be recurring to the principles of atheism, to fate, and blind necessity, to say that the author of nature is obliged to act in the manner in which he usually acts; and that he cannot, in any given circumstances, depart from the course which we observe. The departure, indeed, is to us a novelty. We have no principles by which we can foresee its approach, or form any conjecture with regard to the measure and the end of it. But if we conceive worthily of the Ruler of the universe, we shall believe that all these departures entered into the great plan which he formed in the beginning; that they were ordained and arranged by him; and that they arise at the time which he appointed, and fulfil the purposes of his wisdom.

There is not then any mutability or weakness in those occasional interpositions which seem to us to suspend the

laws and to alter the course of nature. The Almighty Being, who called the universe out of nothing, whose creating hand gave a beginning to the course of nature, and whose will must be independent of that which he himself produced, acts for wise ends, and at particular seasons, not in that manner which he has enabled us to trace, but in another manner concerning which he has not furnished us with the means of forming any expectation, and which is resolvable merely into his good pleasure. The one manner is his ordinary administration, under which his reasonable offspring enjoy security, advance in the knowledge of nature, and receive much instruction: the other manner is his extraordinary administration, which, although foreseen by him as a part of the scheme of his government, appears strange to his intelligent creatures, but which, by this strangeness, may promote purposes to them most important and salutary. It may rouse their attention to the natural proofs of the being and perfections of God; it may afford a practical confutation of the scepticism and materialism to which false philosophy often leads; and, rebuking the pride and the security of man, may teach the nations to know that the Lord God reigneth "in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."*

To such moral purposes as these, any alteration of the course of nature, by the immediate interposition of the Almighty, may be subservient; and no man will presume to say that our limited faculties can assign all the reasons which may induce the Almighty thus to interpose. But we can clearly discern one most important end which may be promoted by those alterations of the course of nature, in which the agency of men, or other visible ministers of the divine power, is employed.

The circumstances of the intelligent creation may render it highly expedient that, in addition to that original revelation of the nature and the will of God which they enjoy by the light of reason, there should be superadded an extraordinary revelation, to remove the errors which had obscured their knowledge, to enforce the practice of their duty, or to revive and extend their hopes. The

* Psalm cxxxv. 6.

wisest ancient philosophers wished for a divine revelation; and to any one who examines the state of the old heathen world in respect of religion and morality, it cannot appear unworthy of the Father of his creatures to bestow such a blessing. This revelation, supposing it to be given, may either be imparted to every individual mind, or be confined to a few chosen persons, vested with a commission to communicate the benefits of it to the rest of the world. It is certainly possible for the Father of spirits to act upon every individual mind so as to give that mind the impression of an extraordinary revelation: it is as easy for the Father of spirits to do this, as to act upon a few minds. But, in this case, departures from the established course of nature would be multiplied without end. In the illumination of every individual, there would be an immediate extraordinary interposition of the Almighty. But such frequent extraordinary interpositions would lose their nature, so as to be confounded with the ordinary light of reason and conscience: or if they were so striking as to be, in every case, clearly discriminated, they would subdue the understanding, and overawe the whole soul, so as to extort, by the feeling of the immediate presence of the Creator, that submission and obedience which it is the character of a rational agent to yield with deliberation and from choice. It appears, therefore, more consistent with the simplicity of nature, and with the character of man, that a few persons should be ordained the instruments of conveying a divine revelation to their fellow-creatures; and that the extraordinary circumstances which must attend the giving such a revelation should be confined to them. But it is not enough that these persons feel the impression of a divine revelation upon their own minds: it is not enough that, in their communications with their fellow-creatures, they appear to be possessed of superior knowledge and more enlarged views: it is possible that their knowledge and views may have been derived from some natural source; and we require a clear indisputable mark to authenticate the singular and important commission which they profess to bear. It were presumptuous in us to say what are the marks of such a commission which the Almighty can give; for our knowledge of what He can do, is chiefly derived from our observation of what he has

done. But we may say, that, according to our experience of the divine procedure, there can be no mark of a divine commission more striking and more incontrovertible, than that the persons who bear it should have the privilege of altering the course of nature by a word of their mouths. The revelation made to their minds is invisible; and all the outward appearances of it may be delusive. But extraordinary works, beyond the power of man, performed by them, are a sensible outward sign of a power which can be derived from God alone. If he has invested them with this power, it is not incredible that he has made a revelation to their minds; and if they constantly appeal to the works, which are the sign of the power, as the evidence of the invisible revelation, and of the commission with which it was accompanied, then we must either believe that they have such a commission, or we are driven to the horrid supposition that God is the author of a falsehood, and conspires with these men to deceive his creatures.

When I call the extraordinary works performed by these men the sign of a power derived from God, you recollect that all the language which we interpret consists of signs; *i. e.* objects and operations which fall under our senses, employed to indicate that which is unseen. What are the looks, the words, and the actions of our fellow-creatures, but signs of that internal disposition which is hidden from our view? What are the appearances which bodies exhibit to our senses, but signs of the inward qualities which produce these appearances? What are the works of nature, but signs of that supreme intelligence, "whom no man hath seen at any time?"* Upon this principle all those events and operations, beyond the compass of human power, which happen according to the established course of nature, form part of the foundations of Natural Religion; and any person who foretells or conducts them only discovers his acquaintance with that course, and his sagacity in applying what we call the laws of nature. Upon the same principle all those events and operations, which happen in opposition to the established course of nature, imply an exertion of the same power which established that course, because they counteract it; and any

* John i. 18.

person who, by a word, produces such events and operations, discovers that this power is committed to him. To command the sun to run his race until the time of his going down, and to command him to stand still about a whole day, as in the valley of Gibeon in the time of Joshua,* are two commands which destroy one another; and, therefore, if we believe that the will of the Almighty Ruler of the universe produces an uniform obedience to the first, we must believe that the obedience which, upon one occasion, was yielded to the second, was the effect of his will also. As no creature can stop the working of his hand, every interruption in that course according to which he usually operates happens by his permission; and the power of altering the course of nature, by whomsoever it be exerted, must be derived from the Lord of nature.

This is the reasoning upon which we proceed, when we argue for the truth of a revelation from extraordinary works performed by those through whom it is communicated; and here we see the important purpose which the Almighty promotes by employing the agency of men to change the order of nature. Those changes which proceed immediately from his hand, however well fitted to impress his creatures with a sense of his sovereignty, do not of themselves prove any new proposition, because their connexion with that proposition is not manifest. But, when visible agents perform works beyond the power of man, and contrary to the course of nature, they give a sign of the interposition of the Almighty, which being applied by their declaration to the doctrine which they teach, becomes a voucher of the truth of what they say. To works of this kind, the term *miracles* is properly applied; and they form what has been called the seal of heaven, implying that delegation of the sovereign authority of the Lord of all, which appears to be reserved in the conduct of providence as the credential of those to whom a divine commission is at any time granted. This was the rod put into the hand of Moses, wherewith to do signs and wonders, that Pharaoh and the children of Israel might believe that the Lord God had sent him. This was the sign given to Elijah, that it might be known that he was a man of God;

* Joshua x. 12—14

and this was the witness which the Father bore to "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, which God did by him in the midst of the people,"* and to the apostles of Jesus who went forth to preach the Gospel, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following."†

The nature of the revelation contained in the books of the New Testament affords a very strong presumptive proof that it comes from God; whilst the works done by Jesus and his Apostles are the direct proof; and the two proofs conspire with the most perfect harmony. The presumptive proof explains the importance and the dignity of that occasion upon which the Almighty was pleased to make the interposition, of which these works are the sign: The direct proof accounts for that transcendent excellence in the doctrine and the character of the author of this system, which, upon the supposition of its being of human origin, appeared to be inexplicable; and thus the internal and external evidence of Christianity, by the aid which they lend to one another, make us "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us."‡

We have found that the reasoning, involved in the argument from miracles, proceeds upon the same principles by which a sound theist infers the being and perfections of God: in both cases, we discover God by his works, which are to us the signs of his agency. This analogy between the proofs of natural and revealed religion is very much illustrated by considering the particular miracles recorded in the Gospel. When we investigate the evidences of natural religion, we find that any works manifestly exceeding human power would lead us, in the course of fair reasoning, to a Being antecedent to the human race, superior to them in strength, and independent of them in the mode of his existence. But it is the transcendent grandeur of those works which we behold, their inimitable beauty, their endless variety, their harmony and utility: it is this infinite superiority of the works of nature above the works of art, which renders the argument completely

* Acts ii. 22. † Mark xvi. 20.
‡ 1 Peter iii. 15.

satisfying, and leaves no doubt in our minds, either of the power or of the moral character of that Being from whom they proceed. In like manner, although, in stating the argument from miracles in support of the Gospel, we have reasoned fairly upon this simple principle, that they are interruptions of the course of nature, yet, when we come to consider those particular interruptions upon which the Gospel founds its claim, we perceive that their nature furnishes a very strong confirmation of the general argument, and that, like the other works of God, they proclaim their Author.

In Him who ruled the raging of the sea, and stilled the tempest, we recognise the Lord of the universe. In that command which gave life to the dead, we recognise the Author of life. In the works of Him who, by a word of his mouth, cured the most inveterate diseases, unstopped the ears which had never admitted a sound, opened the eyes which had never seen the light, conferred upon the most distracted mind the exercise of reason, and restored the withered, maimed, distorted limb, we recognise the Former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. This is the very power by which all things consist, the energy of Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."* The miracles of the Gospel were performed without preparation or concert; they were instantaneous in the manner of being produced, yet their effects were permanent; and, like the works of nature, although they came without effort from the hands of the workman, they bore to be examined by the nicest eye. There does not appear in them that poverty which marks all human exertions; neither the strength nor the skill of Him who did them seemed to be exhausted; but there was a fulness of power, a multiplicity, a diversity, a readiness in the exercise of it, by which they resemble the riches of God that replenish the earth. Yet they were free from parade and ostentation. There were no attempts to dazzle, no anxiety to set off every work to the best advantage, no waste of exertion, no frivolous accompaniments; but a sobriety, a decorum, all the dignified simplicity of nature. The extraordinary power which appeared in the miracles of the

* Acts xvii. 28.

Gospel was employed not to hurt or to terrify, but to heal, to comfort, and to bless. The gracious purpose to which they ministered declared their divine origin; and they who beheld a man who had the command of nature, and "who went about doing good,"* dispensing with a bountiful hand the gifts of heaven, lightening the burdens of human life, and accompanying every exercise of his power with a display of tenderness, condescension, and love, were taught to venerate the messenger, and the "express image" of that Almighty Lord, whose kingdom excels at once in majesty and in grace.

As the religion which these miracles were wrought to attest is in every respect worthy of God, so they were selected with divine wisdom to illustrate the peculiar doctrines of that religion; and in the admirable fitness with which the nature of the proof is accommodated to the nature of the thing to be proved, we have an instance of the same kind with many which the creation affords of the perfection of the divine workmanship. Jesus came preaching forgiveness of sins; and he brought with him a sensible sign of his having received a commission to bestow this invisible gift. Disease was introduced into the world by sin. Jesus therefore cured all manner of disease, that we might know that he had power to forgive sins also: His being able to remove, not by the slow uncertain applications of human art, but instantly, by a word of his mouth spoken at any distance, those temporal maladies which are the present visible fruits of sin, was an assurance to the world of his being able to remove the spiritual evils which flow from the same source. It was a specimen, a symbolical representation of his character as physician of souls. Jesus was that seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent, and he gave in his miracles a sensible sign of the fall of Satan. The influence, which this adversary of mankind in every age exercises over the minds of men, was in that age connected with a degree of power over their bodies. It was the general belief in Judea, that certain diseases proceeded from the possession which his emissaries took of the human body. To the Jews therefore, the casting out devils was an ocular de-

* Acts x. 38.

monstration that Jesus was able to destroy the works of the devil. It was the beginning of the triumphs of this mighty prince, a trophy which he brought from the land of the enemy, to assure his followers of a complete victory. I have bound the strong man. Do you ask a proof? See, I enter his house and spoil his goods. I set free the mind and conscience which he had enslaved. My people will feel their freedom, and will need no foreign proof. But does the world require one? See, by the finger of God, I set free those bodies which Satan torments. His raising the dead was a practical confirmation of that new doctrine of his religion, that the hour is coming when they who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth to the resurrection. You cannot say that the thing is impossible; for you see in his miracles a sample of that almighty power which shall quicken them that sleep in the dust, a sensible sign that Jesus "hath abolished death," and is able to "ransom his people from the power of the grave."*

Other miracles of Jesus may be accommodated to the doctrines of religion, and much spiritual instruction may be derived from them. But these three, the cure of diseases, the casting out devils, and the raising the dead, are applied by himself in the manner which I have stated. They are not only a confirmation of his divine mission, by being a display of the same kind of power which appears in creation and providence, but, from their nature, they are a proof of the characteristical doctrines of the Gospel; and we are led by considering works so great in themselves, and at the same time so apposite to the purpose for which they were wrought, to transfer to the miracles of Jesus that devout exclamation which an enlarged view of the creation dictated to the Psalmist: "How manifold are thy works, O Lord; in wisdom hast thou made them all."†

I have thus stated the force of that argument which arises from the miracles of Jesus, as they are recorded in the New Testament. They who beheld them said, "When Messias cometh, will he do more miracles than those which this man doth? This is the prophet."‡ They spoke what

* 2 Tim. i. 10; Hos. xiii. 14. † Ps. civ. 24. ‡ John vii. 31—40.

they felt, and the deductions of the most enlightened reason upon this subject accord with the feelings of every unbiassed spectator. But we are not the spectators of the miracles of Jesus: the report only has reached our ears; and some farther principles are necessary in our situation to enable us to apply the argument from miracles in support of the truth of Christianity.

SECTION II.

It appeared more consistent with the simplicity of nature and the character of man, that one or more persons should be ordained the instruments of conveying an extraordinary revelation to the rest of the world, than that it should be imparted to every individual mind. The commission of these messengers of heaven may be attested by changes upon the order of nature, which the Almighty accomplishes through their agency. But the works which they do are objects of sense only to their contemporaries with whom they converse. Without a perpetual miracle exhibited in their preservation, those facts which are the proof of the divine revelation must be transmitted to succeeding ages by oral or written tradition, and, like all other facts in the history of former times, they must constitute part of that information which is received upon the credit of testimony. Accordingly we say, that Jesus Christ, for a few years, did signs and wonders in the presence of his disciples, and before all the people: the report of them was carried through the world after his departure from it by chosen witnesses, to whom he had imparted the power of working miracles; and many of the miracles done both by him and his apostles are now written in authentic genuine records which have reached our days, that we also may believe that he is the Son of God. Supposing then we admit, that the eye-witnesses of the miracles of Jesus reasoned justly when they considered them as proofs of a divine commission; still it remains to be inquired, whether

the evidence which has transmitted these miracles to us, is sufficient to warrant us in drawing the same inference which we should have drawn if we ourselves had seen them.

There are three questions which require to be discussed upon this subject. Whether miracles are capable of proof? Whether the testimony borne to the miracles of Jesus was credible at the time it was given? And whether the distance at which we live from that time destroys, or in any material degree impairs, its original credibility?

1. It was said by one of the subtlest reasoners of modern times, that a miracle is incapable of being proved by testimony. His argument was this: "Our belief of any fact attested by eye-witnesses rests upon our experience of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. But a firm and unalterable experience hath established the laws of nature. When, therefore, witnesses attest any fact which is a violation of the laws of nature, here is a contest of two opposite experiences. The proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can be imagined; and if so, it cannot be surmounted by a proof from testimony, because testimony rests upon experience." Mr. Hume boasted of this reasoning as unanswerable, and he holds it forth in his Essay on Miracles as an everlasting check to superstition. The principles upon which the reasoning proceeds have been closely sifted, and their fallacy completely exposed, in Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles; one of the best polemical treatises that ever was written. Mr. Hume meets here with an antagonist who is not inferior to himself in acuteness, and who, supported by the goodness of his cause, has gained a triumphant victory. I consider this dissertation as a standard book for students of divinity. You will find in it accurate reasoning, and much information upon the whole subject of miracles, and, in particular, a thorough investigation of the question which I have now stated.

It is not true that our belief in testimony rests wholly upon experience; for, as every man has a principle of veracity which leads him to speak truth, unless his mind be under some particular wrong bias, so we are led, by the

consciousness of this principle, and by the analogy which we suppose to exist between our own mind and the mind of others, to believe that they also speak the truth, until we learn by experience that they mean to deceive us. It is not accurate to state the firm and unalterable experience which is said to establish the laws of nature as somewhat distinct from testimony; for since the observations of any individual are much too limited to enable him to judge of the uniformity of nature, the word experience, in the sense in which it is used in this proposition, presupposes a faith in testimony, for it comprehends the observations of others communicated to us through that channel. It is not true that a firm and unalterable experience hath established the laws of nature, because the histories of all countries are filled with accounts of deviations from them.

These are objections to the principles of Mr. Hume's argument, which his subtle antagonist brings forward, and presses with much force. But, independently of these inferior points, he has shown that the argument itself is a fallacy; and the sophism lies here. Experience vouches that which is past; but, if the word has any meaning, experience does not vouch that which is future. Our judgment of the future is an inference which we draw from the reports of experience concerning the past: the reports may be true, and yet our inference may be false. Thus experience declares that it is not agreeable to the usual course of nature for the dead to rise. Suppose twelve men to declare that the dead do usually arise, there would be proof against proof; a particular testimony set against our own personal observations, and against all the reports and observations of others which we had collected upon that subject. But suppose twelve men to declare that one dead man did arise, here is no observation between the reports of experience and their testimony; for it does not fall within the province of experience to declare that it is impossible for the dead to rise, or that the usual course of nature in this matter shall never be departed from. We may hastily draw such inferences from the reports of experience. But the inference is our own: we have taken too wide a step in making it; and it is a sophism to say, that because experience vouches the pre-

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mises, experience vouches also that conclusion which is drawn from them merely by a defect in our mode of reasoning.

When witnesses then attest miracles, experience and testimony do not contradict one another. Experience declares that such events do not usually happen: testimony declares that they have happened in that instance. Each makes its own report, and the reports of both may be true. Instances somewhat similar occur in other cases. Unusual events, extraordinary phenomena in nature, strange revolutions in politics, uncommon efforts of genius or of memory, are all received upon testimony. Magnetism, electricity, and galvanism are opposite to the properties of matter formerly known. Yet many, who never saw these new powers exerted, give credit to the reports of the experiments that have been made. Experience indeed begets a presumption with regard to the future. We are disposed to believe that the facts which have been uniformly observed will recur in similar circumstances; and we act upon this presumption. But as new situations may occur, in which a difference of circumstances produces a difference in the event, and as we do not pretend to be acquainted with all the circumstances which discriminate every new case, this presumption is overturned by credible testimony relating facts different from those which have been observed. Without the presumption suggested by experience we should live in perpetual amazement; without the credit given to testimony, we should often remain ignorant, and be exposed to danger. By the one, we accommodate our conduct to the general uniformity of events; by the other, we are apprized of new facts which sometimes arise. The provision made for us by the Author of our nature is in this way complete, and we are prepared for our whole condition.

There does not appear, then, to be any foundation for saying, that a miracle is, from its nature, incapable of being proved by testimony. As nothing can hinder the Author of nature from changing the order of nature whensoever he sees meet, and as one very important purpose in his government is most effectually promoted by employing, at particular seasons, the ministry of men to change this order, a miracle is always a possible event, and be-

comes, in certain circumstances, not improbable. Like every other possible fact, therefore, it may be communicated to such as have not seen it by the testimony of such as have. It is natural, indeed, to weigh very scrupulously the testimony of a miracle, because testimony has in this case to encounter that presumption against the fact which is suggested by experience. The person who relates it may, from ignorance, mistake an unusual application of the laws of nature for a suspension of them; an exercise of superior skill and dexterity for a work beyond the power of man, or he may be disposed to amuse himself, and to promote some private end by our credulity. Accordingly we do not receive any extraordinary fact in common life upon the credit of every man whom we chance to meet. We attend to the character and the manner of the reporter; we lay together the several parts of his report, and we call in every circumstance which may assist us in judging whether he is speaking the truth. The more extraordinary and important the fact be, there is the more reason for this caution; and it is especially proper, in examining the reports of those facts which deserve the name of miracles, *i. e.* works contrary to the course of nature, said to be performed by man, as the evidences of an extraordinary revelation.

2. We are thus led to the second question which I stated, Whether the testimony borne to the miracles of Jesus was credible?

The Apostles were chosen by Jesus to be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, and of his resurrection from the dead. This was the commission which they received from him immediately before his ascension, the character under which they appeared before the Jewish council, and the office which they assume in their writings. It is not my business to spread out the circumstances which render theirs a credible testimony, and give to each its proper colouring. It is enough for me to mention the sources of argument.

In judging of the credibility of this testimony, you are led back to that branch of the internal evidence of Christianity which arises from the character of the Apostles, as it appears in their writings—in their unblemished conduct,

and distinguished virtues—in that soundness of understanding, and calmness of temper which are opposite to enthusiasm,—and in those simple artless manners which are most unlike to imposture. You are farther to observe, that their relation of the miracles of Jesus consists of palpable facts, which were the objects of sense. The power by which a man born blind received his sight was invisible; but that the man was born blind might be learned with certainty from his parents or neighbours: and that, by obeying a simple command of Jesus, he recovered his sight, was manifest to every spectator. The power which raised a dead man was invisible; but that Jesus and his disciples met a large company carrying forth a young man to his burial—that this young man was known to his friends, and believed by all the company to be truly dead, and that upon Jesus' coming to the bier, and bidding him arise, he sat up and began to speak; all these are points which it did not require a superior learning or sagacity to discern, but concerning which any person in the exercise of his senses, who was present and who bestowed an ordinary degree of attention, could not be mistaken. The case is the same with the other miracles. We are not required to rest upon the judgment of the Apostles—upon their acquaintance with physical causes, for the miraculous nature of the works which Jesus did; for they give us simply the facts which they saw, and leave us to make the inference for ourselves. There is no amplification in their manner of recording the miracles, no attempt to excite our wonder, no exclamation of surprise upon their part; they relate the most marvellous exertions of their Master's power with the same calmness as ordinary facts; they sometimes mention the feelings of joy and admiration which were uttered by the other spectators; they hardly ever express their own.

This temperance, with which the Apostles speak of all that Jesus did, gives every reader a security in receiving their report, which he would not have felt had the narration been turgid. Yet he cannot entertain any doubt of their being convinced that the works of Jesus were truly miraculous; for by these works they were attached to a stranger. While they lived in honest obscurity, an extraordinary personage appeared in their country, and called

upon them to follow him. They left their occupations and their homes, and continued for some years the witnesses of all that he did. They were Jews, and had those feelings which have ever distinguished the sons of Abraham with regard to the national religion. Their education, instead of enlarging their views, had confirmed their prejudices. Yet they were converted: with every thing else, they forsook their religion, and joined a man who was the author of a system which professed to supersede the law of Moses. They received him as the promised Messiah. But, possessed with the fond hopes of the Jewish nation, they believed that he was a temporal prince, come to restore the kingdom to Israel, and to make the Jews masters of the world. They were undeceived. Yet this disappointment did not shake their faith. Although they had followed Jesus in the expectation of being the ministers and favourites of an earthly prince, they were content to remain, during his life, the wandering attendants of a man who had "not where to lay his head;" and they appeared in public, after his departure from the earth, as his disciples. The body of the Jewish people, attached to the law of Moses, regarded them as traitors to their nation. To the priests and rulers, whose influence depended upon the established faith, they were peculiarly obnoxious. That civil power, with which the spirit of the Jewish religion had invested its ministers, was directed against the apostles of Jesus: and without any attempt to disprove the facts which they asserted, every effort was made to silence them by force. They were imprisoned and called before the most august tribunal of the state. There the high priest, armed with all the dignity and authority of his sacred office, commanded them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. Yet these men, educated in servile dread of the higher powers, with the prospect of instant punishment before their eyes, declared that they would obey God rather than man. Their conduct corresponded to this heroic declaration. Although exposed to the fury of the populace and the vengeance of the rulers, they continued in the words of truth and soberness to execute their commission; and they sealed their testimony with their blood; martyrs, not to speculative opinions in which they might be mistaken, but to

facts which they declared they had seen and heard, which they said they were commanded to publish, and which no threatening or punishment could make them either deny or conceal.

The history of mankind has not preserved a testimony so complete and satisfying as that which I have now stated. If, in conformity to the exhibitions which the writings of these men give of their character, you suppose their testimony to be true, then you can give the most natural account of every part of their conduct, of their conversion, their stedfastness, and their heroism. But if, notwithstanding every appearance of truth, you suppose their testimony to be false, inexplicable circumstances and glaring absurdities crowd upon you. You must suppose that twelve men of mean birth, of no education, living in that humble station which placed ambitious views out of their reach and far from their thoughts, without any aid from the state, formed the noblest scheme that ever entered into the mind of man, adopted the most daring means of executing that scheme, and conducted it with such address as to conceal the imposture under the semblance of simplicity and virtue. You must suppose that men guilty of blasphemy and falsehood united in an attempt the best contrived, and which has in fact proved the most successful, for making the world virtuous; that they formed this singular enterprise without seeking any advantage to themselves, with an avowed contempt of honour and profit, and with the certain expectation of scorn and persecution; that although conscious of one another's villany, none of them ever thought of providing for his own security by disclosing the fraud; but that, amidst sufferings the most grievous to flesh and blood, they persevered in their conspiracy to cheat the world into piety, honesty, and benevolence.

They who can swallow such suppositions have no title to object to miracles. They should remember that there is a moral as well as a physical order; that there are certain general principles by which human actions are regulated, and upon which we are accustomed to proceed in our judgments of the conduct of men; and that it is much more difficult to conceive that, in opposition to those prin-

ciples which analogy and experience have established, such a testimony as the apostles uttered should be false, than that the laws of nature in some particular instances should have been suspended. Of the suspension of the laws of nature we can give a rational account: the purpose for which it is said to have been made renders it not incredible. But the falsehood of testimony in such circumstances would be a phenomenon in the history of the human mind so strange and inexplicable, that we need not be afraid to apply to this case the words of Mr. Hume, although he certainly did not mean them to be so applied: "No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." The falsehood of the testimony of the apostles would be more miraculous, *i. e.* it is more improbable than any fact which they attest.

3. But although the testimony of the apostles appears, upon all the principles according to which we judge of such matters, to have been credible at the time when it was given, it remains to be inquired, whether the distance at which we live from that time does, in any material degree, impair to us its original credibility.

It is allowed that the testimony of the apostles received the strongest confirmation from its having been emitted immediately after the ascension of Jesus, in the very place where they said he had performed many of his mighty works, under the eye of that government which had persecuted him, and in presence of multitudes to whom they appealed as witnesses of what they declared. This must be allowed by all who are qualified to judge of evidence. Now let it be remembered that the benefit of this confirmation is not lost to us, because, although their testimony was at first oral, given in their preaching to those whom they converted, it was soon recorded in books which we receive upon satisfying evidence as authentic and genuine. There is therefore no room to allege in disparagement of this testimony, the inaccuracy of verbal reports, or the natural disposition to exaggerate in the repetition of every extraordinary event. We are put in possession of the facts as they were published in the lifetime of the apostles,

without the embellishments of succeeding ages; and every circumstance which moved those who heard their testimony is preserved in their books to establish our faith.

The early publication of the Gospels and Acts is to us an unquestionable voucher of the following most important facts,—that the miracles of our Lord and his apostles were not done in a corner before a few select friends, and by them artfully spread through the world, but were performed openly, in the fields, in the city, in the temple, before enemies who had every opportunity of examining them, who did not regard them with indifference, who were alarmed with the effect which they produced upon the minds of the people, and were zealous in bringing forward every objection. Had any one of these circumstances been false, the early publication of books asserting them would have overturned the scheme. Further, there is much particularity in the narration of many of the miracles: reference is made to time and place; many local circumstances are introduced; persons are marked out, not only by their distress, but by their rank and their names; the emotions of the spectators, the joy of those who received deliverance, the consultations held by rulers, and the public orders in consequence of certain miracles, all enter into the record of these books. While every intelligent reader discerns in this particular detail the most accurate acquaintance with the prejudices and the manners of the times, and is from thence satisfied that the books are authentic, he must also be satisfied that a detail which, by its particularity, called so much attention, and admitted, at the time it was published, of so easy investigation, is itself a voucher of its own truth. Again, the history of the miracles is so closely interwoven with the rest of the narration, that any man who reads it may be satisfied that it could not have been inserted after the books were published. There are numberless allusions to the miracles even in those passages where none of them are recorded; the faith of the first disciples is said to have been founded upon them, and the change upon their sentiments is truly inexplicable, unless we suppose the miracles to have been done in their presence. All, therefore, who received the Gospels and the Acts in early times, when they could easily examine the truth of the

facts, may be considered as setting their seal to the miracles of Jesus and his apostles; and the number of the first converts out of Judea and Jerusalem forms, in this way, a cloud of witnesses.

That confirmation of the testimony of the apostles, which appears to be implied in the faith of all the first Christians, is rendered much more striking, by the peculiar nature of a large part of the New Testament. I mean the epistles to the different churches. Paul, in several of the epistles which he sent by particular messengers to those whose names they bear, and which were authenticated to the whole Christian world by his superscription, mentions the miracles which he had performed, the effect which his miracles had produced, and the extraordinary powers which he had imparted. A large portion of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is occupied with a discourse concerning spiritual gifts, in which he speaks of them as common in that church, as abused by many who possessed them, and as inferior in excellence to moral virtue. In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is known to have been the earliest of the apostolical writings, Paul says, "Our Gospel came to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost; and they, *i. e.* your own citizens, in their progress through different parts of the world, show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned from idols to serve the living God."* Here is a letter written not twenty years after the ascension of Jesus, sent as soon as it was written to the church of Thessalonica to be read there, and in the neighbouring churches, copied and circulated by those to whom it was addressed, uniformly quoted since that time by the succession of Christian writers, and come down to us with every evidence that can be desired, indeed without any dispute, of its being a genuine letter. In this letter the apostle tells the Thessalonians that they had been converted to the Gospel by the miracles of those who preached it, and that the effect which this conversion had produced upon their conduct was talked of everywhere. If these facts had not been known to the Thessalonians, the letter would have been instantly rejected, and the

* 1 Thess. i. 5, 9.

character of him who wrote it would have sunk into contempt. Its being publicly read, held in veneration, and transmitted by them, is a proof that every thing said in it concerning themselves is true, and therefore it is a proof that those who could not be mistaken, believed in the miracles of the apostles of our Lord. This argument is handled by Butler, and all the ablest defenders of our religion; and I have been led to state it particularly, because it has always appeared to me an unanswerable argument, arising out of the books themselves, a confirmation of the testimony of the apostles that is independent of their personal character, and yet is demonstrative of the estimation in which they were held by their contemporaries, and of the credit which we may safely give to their report.

4. It only remains to be added upon this question, that a testimony thus strongly confirmed is not contradicted by any opposite testimony. The books of the New Testament are full of concessions made by the adversaries of Christianity; concessions, the force of which must be admitted by all who believe the books to be authentic: and it is very remarkable, that concessions of exactly the same kind with those made by the Jews in our Saviour's days, were made by the zealous and learned adversaries of our faith in the first four centuries. Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian did not deny the facts; they only attempted to disparage them, or to ascribe them to magic. Julian was emperor of Rome in the fourth century. He had renounced Christianity, and his zeal to revive the ancient heathen worship made him the bitterest enemy of a system which condemned all the forms of idolatry. Yet this man, with every wish to overturn the establishment which Christianity had received from Constantine, does not pretend to say in his work against the Christians, that no miracles were performed by Jesus. In one place he says, "Jesus, who rebuked the winds, and walked on the seas, and cast out dæmons, and as you will have it, made the heavens and the earth." In another place, "Jesus has been celebrated about three hundred years, having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of remembrance, unless any one thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise dæmoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida

and Bethany."* The prejudices of the emperor led him to speak slightingly of the miracles; but the facts are admitted by him. It was reserved for infidels at the distance of seventeen hundred years from the event, to dispute a testimony which had appeared satisfying to those who heard it, and which had not received any contradiction in the succession of ages. Because they did not believe in magic, and saw the futility of that account of the works of Jesus which the prejudices of the times had drawn from their predecessors in infidelity, they have taken a new ground, and they affirm, against the principles of human nature, against the faith of history, and the concessions of the earliest adversaries, that the works never were done. But Christianity has nothing to fear from any change in the mode of attack. Sound philosophy will always furnish weapons sufficient to repel the aggressor; and the truth will be the more firmly established by every display of the mutability of error.

It appears then, that even that part of the external evidence of Christianity, which from its nature is the most likely to be affected by length of time, is not evanescent; that various circumstances preserve it from diminution; and that we, in these latter ages, may certainly know the truth of the testimony borne by those who declare in the books of the New Testament that which they saw and heard.

SECTION III.

The subject would now be exhausted if the only miracles recorded in history were those to which Jesus and his Apostles made their appeal. This singular attestation, given upon so important an occasion, would then appear a decisive mark of the interposition of the Almighty; and every person who believes the books of the New Testament to be authentic, might be expected to join in the opinion of Nicodemus, who said to Jesus, "We know that

* Lardner's Heath. Test. ch. xlvi.

thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."* But the subject is involved in new difficulties, and assumes a much more complicated form, when we recollect that accounts of prodigies and miracles abound in all history, that these miracles are generally connected with the religion of the country in which the record of them is preserved, and that, as the religions of different countries are widely different, the miracles of one country appear to contradict the miracles of another. If it be said that all the reports of miracles, excepting those recorded in the Scriptures, are false, then it follows that there must be a facility of imposition in this matter against which the human mind has never been proof. If some other reports of miracles, besides those in Scripture, are admitted to be true, then it seems to follow, that miracles are not the unequivocal mark of a divine commission.

This multitude of reports concerning miracles has afforded much triumph to the adversaries of Christianity, and, in the opinion of Mr. Hume, the authority of any testimony concerning a religious miracle is so much diminished by the ridiculous stories, and the gross impositions of the same kind in all ages, that men of sense should lay down a general resolution to reject it without any examination. The zeal with which he writes has led him to recommend a resolution very unbecoming a philosopher. At the same time, it must be allowed that, upon the one hand, the prejudice arising from the multitude of false miracles which have been reported and believed, and, upon the other hand, the suspicion that out of the number preserved in ancient history, some may have been real miracles, furnish a very plausible objection against this branch of the external evidence of Christianity; an objection which every person whose business it is to defend the truth of our religion must be prepared to meet; and an objection which there is the more reason for studying with care, because the attempts to answer it have not always been conducted with sufficient ability and prudence, and some zealous champions of Christianity have mistaken the

* John iii. 2.

ground which ought to be maintained in repelling this attack.

The four observations which follow, appear to me to embrace the leading points in this controversy, and when properly extended by reading and reflection, will be found sufficient to remove the objection arising from the multitude of miracles mentioned in history.

1. No religion, except the Jewish and Christian, which, by every person who understands the Gospel, are accounted one religion,—no other religion, that we know of, claimed to be received upon the footing of miracles performed by its author.

Some of the ancient lawgivers said that they had private conferences with the Deity, in which the system of religious or civil polity, which they established, was communicated to them. But none of them pretended to produce, in the presence of the people, changes upon the order of nature. The Pagan mythology was much more ancient than any record of miracles in profane history. Many of the achievements of the gods run back into those periods of which there is no history that is not accounted fabulous;—some are known to the learned to be an allegorical method of conveying moral or physical truth; and others are merely the colouring which fable and poetry gave to the transactions of a remote antiquity handed down by oral tradition. The miracles recorded in the times of authentic history coincided with a superstition already established, the influence of which prepared the minds of men for receiving them. They were performed by priests, or men of rank, to whom the people were accustomed to look up with reverence; generally in temples consecrated by the offerings of ages, where it was impious for the eye of the worshippers to pry too closely; under the protection of civil government; and in support of a system which antiquity had hallowed, and which the law commanded the citizens to respect. The miracles of the Gospel, on the other hand, were performed by obscure despised men, in the midst of enemies, as the vouchers of a new doctrine which was accounted an insult to the gods, and which did not flatter the passions of men. It is manifest that the cases are widely different; and before pro-

ceeding to any particular examination of the heathen miracles, you are warranted in considering the whole multitude of them as clearly discriminated from the miracles recorded in Scripture, by this circumstance, that they were not wrought for the purpose of procuring credit to a new system of faith. In the seventh century Mahomet appeared in Arabia, calling himself the chief of the prophets of God, sent to extirpate idolatry, and to establish a new and perfect religion. He acknowledged the divine mission both of Moses and of Jesus. He often mentions the evident miracles which Jesus wrought, and he has preserved the names of the persons whom our Lord raised from the dead. Those who opposed him demanded a sign of his mission. He gave various reasons for not complying with this demand, and in different places of the Koran appears solicitous to obviate the doubts which his refusal excited. But although his reasons were not satisfying, and he was harassed with importunity,—although he lived amongst a barbarous unlearned people, and although he possessed a very uncommon share of ability and address, he had the prudence never to make the experiment of working a miracle, and he confesses that God, in his sovereignty, had withheld from him that power. The Church of Rome claims the power which Mahomet did not assume, and the history of that church is full of wonders said to be performed at the shrines of saints and martyrs, by the divine virtue residing in a relic, or by the power committed to a religious order, to a particular sect, or to the whole church. But all these are in support of a system already established, and in conformity to the wishes and expectations of the spectators; and, like the heathen miracles, they extend the prevailing superstition by introducing or confirming doctrines, rites, and practices, exactly similar to those which had been formerly received.

It appears, then, from this review, that the history of the world does not present, out of that multitude of miracles which it has recorded, any that were performed under the disadvantages which attended the Christian, for the purpose of introducing a change upon the religious sentiments of mankind. All the rest were aided by the prevailing opinions; these alone were opposed by them:

all the rest found men ready to believe; these alone produced a new faith.

2. As the circumstance which I have mentioned forms, upon a general view of the matter, a clear discrimination of the miracles of the Bible, so, when we enter upon a particular examination, there appears to be the most striking difference between them and all other miracles, in the evidence with which they are transmitted. The testimony for a miracle requires to be tried with caution, because it contradicts the presumption suggested by experience; and the more instances there are of imposition or mistake in reports of this kind, there is the more reason for weighing every report with the most scrupulous exactness. When we proved the testimony borne by the apostles to the miracles of Jesus, we found a multitude of circumstances which conspire to render it credible. But when we try, by the same standard of sound criticism, the testimony borne either to the heathen or to popish miracles, it is found to be very much wanting. Many of the heathen miracles were prodigies which had no connexion with any religious system, or they were phenomena which appeared wonderful to ignorant men, but which a more enlarged acquaintance with nature has enabled us to explain. Others were extraordinary works, recorded long after the time when they are said to have been performed, and recorded by historians who, while they adorn their writings with popular stories, are careful to distinguish the narration, which they consider as authentic, from the reports which they retail because they received them. The miracles which Tacitus reports as performed by the Emperor Vespasian, the feats of Alexander of Pontus, which we learn from Lucian, who represents him as an impostor, and the works ascribed to Apollonius of Tyana, whom some of the later Platonists are said to have raised up as a rival to our Lord,—all these have been examined by men of learning and judgment; and the most zealous friend of Christianity could not wish for a more favourable display of the unexceptionable testimony upon which its miracles are received, than is obtained by contrasting it with the air of falsehood which runs through all these accounts.

Mr. Hume has been solicitous to place the evidence of some popish miracles in the most advantageous light, and

he has collected, with an air of triumph, various circumstances which conspired to attest the miracles said to be performed about the beginning of the last century, in the church-yard of St. Medard, at the tomb of the Abbé Paris. But although a particular purpose induced him to assume the appearance of an advocate for these miracles, yet the imposture was manifest at the time to many who lived upon the spot, and it has since that time been completely exposed in several treatises. In Campbell's Dissertation, in the Criterion by Dr. Douglas, late bishop of Salisbury, in Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History, and in other books, there is an investigation of many pretended miracles; and I believe it will be acknowledged, without hesitation, that Dr. Campbell and Dr. Douglas have clearly shown, with regard to all the miracles to which their investigation extends, either that the accounts of them, from the circumstances, appear to be false, or that the facts, from their nature, are not miraculous. I am inclined to think that, as far as this investigation can be carried, it will be found uniformly to apply to the miracles recorded in heathen story, or in popish legends; and that, as a person, who has been accustomed to read much history and much fable, is at no loss to distinguish the one from the other when they are presented to him, so any one who duly considers the circumstances of the case will most readily discriminate the precise assured testimony of miracles wrought by Jesus as a divine teacher, which eye-witnesses submitted at the very time and place to the examination of their enemies, from the hesitating, suspicious record of wonders said to be performed for some insignificant purpose, which the historians did not see, or which the rank and characters of the person to whom they are ascribed preserved from the scrutiny even of those who saw them. The evidence of the miracles of the Gospel, far from being diminished by the number of impostures, is very much illustrated by this contrast. Men, indeed, cannot perceive the difference without an exercise of understanding. They are required here, as upon every other subject, to separate truth from falsehood, to "prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good."* Extensive information and en-

* 1 Thess. v. 21.

lightened criticism are called in to be the handmaids of religion; and the continued increase of human knowledge, instead of giving Christians any reasonable ground for apprehending danger, enables them to defend the principles which they have embraced, dissipates objections which might occur to the ignorant, and establishes the faith of those who inquire.

I said, I am inclined to think, that if the investigation of which Dr. Douglas and Dr. Campbell have given a specimen, were extended farther, it would be found to apply uniformly to the miracles recorded in heathen story or in popish legends. I used this guarded expression, because I do not consider any man as warranted to say, before he has examined them, that all apparent miracles, excepting those recorded in the Bible, may be accounted for by the dexterity of an impostor, or by the carelessness or ignorance of the spectators.

3. And, therefore, my third observation is, that although we should ascribe some of the extraordinary works recorded in history to the agency of evil spirits, the argument from miracles for the truth of Christianity is not impaired.

They who can satisfy their minds that such works are not miraculous, or that the accounts of them are false, leave the argument from miracles entire to Judaism and Christianity. They who cannot satisfy their minds in this manner, and who judge from the nature of the works, or the purpose which they promote, that they did not proceed from God, are led by their principles to ascribe them to some intermediate beings between God and man. But this system, as we have been taught by our Lord to reason,* does not affect the argument from miracles. For thus stands the case: The orders of intermediate beings are wholly unknown to human reason. There may be good, and there may be bad spirits, and their measure of power may be more, or it may be less. But as we infer from all the appearances of nature, and especially from the constitution of our own minds, that this world is not the work of an evil being, so having found that the nature of the revelation contained in the New Testament affords a very strong presumption of its coming from God, we can-

* Matt. chap. xii.

not suppose that the miracles, which are the direct proof of this presumption, and which actually were the means of establishing the Gospel, came from an evil being. The conduct of the adversary of mankind was indeed very opposite to the cunning which is ascribed to him, if he gave his sanction to the man who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and employed his power to undermine his own kingdom, and put an end to his own malicious joy. As far, then, as the argument from miracles for the truth of Christianity is concerned, the power of evil spirits is merely a speculative point, upon which, as upon many other speculative points concerning which our information is imperfect, different opinions may be held without any injury to the truth. Whatever system we adopt with regard to the power of Satan, howsoever evil spirits may be supposed to have acted at other times, we are as certain as the nature of the thing can make us, that their power was not exerted in the establishment of our faith, and we rest in the miracles of Jesus as wrought by the finger of God.

But, although speculations concerning the power of evil spirits are in no degree necessary to a rational belief of Christianity, yet they will naturally fall in your way, when you are investigating the argument from miracles, and you ought not to be strangers to the grounds upon which the different opinions rest. It has been said, that God alone can work miracles, because the sovereign of the universe never will permit any evil spirit to encroach so far upon the prerogative of his majesty, as to produce any work contrary to the order of nature. This opinion seems to present the most honourable view of the Almighty; it professes to afford security against many delusions, which, according to other systems, are practicable; it leaves the argument from miracles clear and unembarrassed, and it has been supported by much ingenious reasoning. But it appears to me presumptuous, because it assumes more, and pronounces with a more decisive tone concerning the conduct of the divine government, than is competent to our ignorance. It contradicts the obvious interpretation of several passages of Scripture, and the attempts to give these passages a meaning not inconsistent with it, have tortured Scripture in a manner which is not justifiable. It

has been said, on the other hand, that evil spirits have been accustomed, in all ages, to exercise their power in astonishing, deluding, and misleading the minds of men; that all false religions have been supported by their influence, and that they are continually busied in corrupting true religion. Even the able and profound Cudworth represents it as unquestionable, that Apollonius of Tyana was made choice of by the policy, and assisted by the powers of the kingdom of darkness, for the doing some things extraordinary, in order to derogate from the miracles of our Saviour, and enable Paganism to bear up against the attacks of Christianity. When the matter is thus stated, a most uncomfortable view of the moral state of the universe is presented to us; a view which, without some qualification, approaches very near to the Manichæan system, by subjecting the feeble race of man, in their most important concerns, alternately to the dominion of opposite powers. The safe opinion upon this subject appears to me to lie in the middle between these two. We cannot pretend to say that an intermediate being never is allowed to suspend the laws of nature. But we are certain that all power is dependent upon the Lord of nature. We should be careful not to bewilder ourselves, by carrying the ideas suggested by the weakness of human government into our speculations concerning the ways of God; and, we should always remember, that, in the administration of Him whose eyes are in every place, there can be no delay or opposition to his purpose from the multitude of his ministers. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven." God is all in all. The power of working miracles may descend from the Almighty through a gradation of good spirits; and he may commission evil spirits, by exercising the power given to them, to prove his people, or to execute a judicial sentence upon those who receive not the love of the truth. But both good and evil spirits are absolutely under his control: they fulfil his pleasure, and he works by them.

This is the system which appears to be intimated in Scripture, as far as the Spirit of God hath seen meet to reveal a speculative point which is not essential to our improvement or comfort. It is indeed very remarkable, that at the introduction of both the Jewish and the Chris-

tian dispensations, there seems, according to the most natural interpretation of Scripture, to have been a certain display of the power of evil spirits—I mean in the works of the Egyptian magicians, and in the demoniacs of the New Testament. But in both cases the display appears to have been permitted by God, that it might be made manifest there was in nature a superior power. The magicians, after they had imitated some of the works of Moses, could go no farther, but said "This is the finger of God;" and therefore God says to Pharaoh, "For this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."* The evil spirits which had afflicted the bodies of men owned, in like manner, the power of Jesus, and retired at his command. Therefore he says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven;" and again, "If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come to you."† Both dispensations give warning of false prophets who should show signs. Moses says, "If there arise among you a prophet and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, saying, let us go after other gods, thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love him with all your soul."‡ Our Lord says, "There shall arise false Christs, and shall show great signs and wonders;"§ and it is part of the description which his Apostle gives of Antichrist, "His coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders."‖ Even although you suppose it to be meant by these warnings, that the signs and wonders were to be performed with the assistance of evil spirits, still the miracles upon which the two dispensations are founded afford a clear demonstration of the supremacy of their Author; and if evil spirits had permission given them to exercise a certain power at those times, it was only to prepare for the destruction of their power.

In the very constitution of the evidence of the two religions, provision is made for preserving the true disciples

* Exod. viii. 19.; ix. 16.
† Luke x. 18; xi. 20.
‡ Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.
§ Matt. xxiv. 24.
‖ 2 Thess. ii. 9.

from the dread of evil spirits. Whatever opinions may have been entertained concerning their power, they manifestly stand forth in the Bible confessing their inferiority, and furnishing by this confession, to all whose understandings are sound, and whose hearts are upright, a perpetual antidote against the fears of superstition.

It appears, then, that the system which ascribes many of the miracles recorded in history to the agency of evil spirits does not detract from the evidence of Christianity, because our faith rests upon works whose distinguishing character, and whose manifest superiority to the power of evil spirits, are calculated to remove every degree of hesitation in applying the argument which miracles afford.

One observation more shuts up the subject.

4. The uncertainty with regard to the duration of miracles in the Christian church, does not invalidate the argument arising from the miracles of Jesus and his apostles.

All Protestants, and many Catholics, believe that the claim of working miracles which the Church of Rome advances as one mark of her being the true Church is without foundation; and no impartial discerning person, who reads the history of the wonders which for many centuries have been recorded by that Church, can hesitate a moment in classing them with the tricks of heathen priests. Dr. Middleton, in his letter from Rome, has shown that many of the Popish are an imitation of the heathen miracles, and even those who do not admit that they have been borrowed, cannot deny the resemblance. On the other hand, every Christian believes that real miracles were performed in the days of the Apostles: and the unanimous tradition of the Christian Church has preserved the memory of many in succeeding ages. It is natural then to inquire at what period the true miracles ceased, and the fictitious commenced. Some mark is called for to distinguish so important an era, and the imprudence of which some Christian writers have been guilty in their attempts to fix it, has afforded a kind of triumph to those who were willing to expose every weak quarter in the defence of Christianity. Dr. Middleton, in his book, entitled—A free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which have been supposed to subsist in the Christian Church, maintained this position, that after the days of the Apos-

ties, the Church did not possess any standing power of working miracles. Those who were zealous for the honour of the early fathers attacked, with much bitterness, a position which directly impugned their authority. Some of them very unadvisedly said, that if all the miracles after the days of the Apostles, which were attested unanimously by the primitive fathers, are no better than enthusiasm and imposture, then we are deprived of our evidence for the truth of the Gospel miracles. Others undertook to defend the reality of the miracles in the first four centuries; and they weakened their defence by extending their frontier. The controversy was keenly agitated about the middle of the last century; and the attention of the world was lately drawn to it by the fascinating language of Mr. Gibbon, who, mixing truth and falsehood together, and colouring both with his masterly pencil, has contrived to reflect, from the claims of the primitive Church, a degree of suspicion upon the Gospel miracles.

No person who believes the Gospel will think it incredible that miracles were performed during the whole of the first century, because the Apostle John lived about the end of it, and many of those to whom the Apostles had communicated spiritual gifts probably survived it. All the Christian writers of the second and third centuries affirm that miraculous gifts did, in certain measure, continue in the Christian Church, and were, at times, exerted in the cure of diseases, and the expulsion of demons. But those, who have examined their writings with critical accuracy, have shown that there is much looseness and exaggeration in the language which Mr. Gibbon has employed with regard to these gifts. To satisfy you of this, I shall place a passage from that historian over against passages from Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius. Mr. Gibbon says, the Christian Church, from the times of the Apostles and their first disciples, has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers. Amongst these he mentions the power of raising the dead. In the days of Irenæus, he affirms, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was far from being esteemed an uncommon event; the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplications of the church of the place, and

the persons thus restored to their prayers, lived afterwards among them many years.* Now hear Irenæus himself. The true disciples of Jesus, by a power derived from him, conferred blessings upon other men, as each has been enabled. Some expel demons so effectually, that they who have been delivered from evil spirits believe and become members of the church; others have knowledge of futurity, see visions, and utter prophecies; others cure diseases by the imposition of hands; and, as we have said, the dead too have been raised, and remained some years with us.† Observe he changes the tense in the last clause; it is ηγερθησαν, παρεμειναν. He does not speak of the power of raising the dead as present, but as having been exerted in some time past, so that the persons who were the objects of it reached to his own days. Mr. Gibbon himself has shown that the Bishop of Antioch did not know, in the second century, that the power of raising the dead existed in the Christian church; and no Christian writer, in the second or third century, mentions this miracle as performed in his time. You may judge from this specimen of the accuracy of Mr. Gibbon. Origen says, in the third century, signs of the Holy Spirit were shown where Jesus began to teach, more numerous after his ascension; and, in succeeding times, less numerous. But even at this day, there are traces of it in a few men who have had their souls cleansed.‡ Eusebius, in the beginning of the fourth century, says, Our Lord himself, even at this day, is wont to manifest some small portions of his power in those whom he judges proper for it.§ If you give credit to these respectable testimonies, and they are entitled to respect, both from the manner in which they are given, and from the characters of the authors, you will believe that the profusion of miraculous gifts which was poured forth in the days of the Apostles was gradually withdrawn in the succeeding ages, and that the fathers were sensible of this gradual cessation, but boasted that some gifts did continue, and were occasionally exerted during the first

* Gibbon's Rom. Hist. ch. 15.
† Iren. lib. ii. cap. 32.
‡ Orig. contra Cels. lib. vii. p. 337.
§ Eus. Dem. Ev. lib. iii. p. 109.

three centuries. This gradual cessation is agreeable to the analogy of the divine procedure in other matters. It left an occasional support to the faith of Christians, so long as they were exposed to persecution under the heathen emperors; and it serves to account for what Mr. Gibbon calls the insensibility of the Christians with regard to the cessation of miraculous powers. If these powers were withdrawn, one by one, and the display of them became gradually less frequent, the insensibility of Christians with regard to the cessation of miracles is not wonderful; and the writers, whom I have quoted, have spoken of the subject in that manner which was most natural.

Although it seems probable that miraculous powers did, in certain measure, continue in the Christian church during the first three centuries, yet it cannot be said that the testimony borne to all the miracles of that period is unsuspicious. There probably was much credulity and inattention in the relaters, and their reports are destitute of many of those circumstances which are found in the testimony of the Apostles. But it is always to be remembered that the two are independent of one another. We do not receive the miracles of the Gospel upon the testimony of the fathers; and, although all the miracles said to be wrought after the days of the Apostles be rejected, the evidence of the works, which Jesus and his Apostles did, would rest exactly upon that footing on which we placed it.

It was to be expected, that miraculous gifts which had perceptibly decreased till the days of Constantine, would cease entirely when the protection afforded by the civil government to the Christians rendered them less necessary. Yet we find ecclesiastical history, after Christianity became the religion of the state, abounding with a diversity of the greatest miracles. No wise champion of Christianity will attempt to defend the reality of these wonders; at the same time, the extravagance of the later fictions will not discredit, with any wise inquirer, the miracles of former times. It is obvious to observe, that the Christian world was prepared, by having been witnesses of real miracles, for receiving without suspicion such as were fictitious, that the effect, which true miracles had produced, might induce vain or deceitful men to employ this engine in accomplishing their own purposes, and that after Christian-

ity was the established religion, the use of this engine became as easy to the Christians, as it was to the heathen priests of old. The innumerable forgeries of this sort, says Dr. Middleton, strengthen the credibility of the Jewish and Christian miracles. For how could we account for a practice so universal, of forging miracles for the support of false religions, if on some occasions they had not actually been wrought for the confirmation of a true one? Or how is it possible that so many spurious copies should pass upon the world, without some genuine original from whence they were drawn, whose known existence and tried success might give an appearance of probability to the counterfeit? We may add, that if these counterfeits were at any time detected, the strong prejudice which would arise from the detection against that religion, in support of which they were adduced, could be counterbalanced only by the unquestionable evidence of the miracles of former times.

It appears then, that the duration of miracles in the Christian church is a question of curiosity in no degree essential to the evidence of our religion. If no miracles were really performed after the days of the apostles, then every Christian receives all that ever were wrought upon unquestionable testimony. If there were some real miracles in after-times, they must stand upon their own evidence. We may receive them, or reject them, as they appear to us well or ill vouched; and we can draw no inference, from the multiplicity of imitations or forgeries, unfavourable to the truth and divinity of the original.

Bonnet, in his philosophical and critical inquiries concerning Christianity, has given, besides much other valuable matter, the most satisfying statement that I have met with of the argument from miracles. Bonnet's work was written in French. An extract of the part of it most interesting to a student in divinity, was translated by a clergyman of this church, and published some years ago.

Bishop Sherlock, in his first volume of sermons, which is chiefly occupied in stating the superiority of revealed to natural religion, has two discourses, the ninth and tenth, upon miracles considered as the proof of revelation. He treats the subject in his usual luminous manner, and suggests many just and useful views.

Newcome, in his observations on the conduct of our Saviour, has written largely and delightfully of his miracles.

Jortin also, in some of his essays or discourses, and in his remarks

on ecclesiastical history, has very ably illustrated the fitness with which our Lord's miracles were adapted both to prove the truth of his religion, and to impress upon his followers the characteristical doctrines of the gospel. This view of the subject is also prosecuted by Ogden in his sermons.

Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles.
Douglas's Criterion.
Butler's Analogy.
Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History.
Paley's Evidences.
Farmer on Miracles.
Cudworth, translated by Mosheim.
Leland's View of Deistical Writers.
Randolph's View of our Lord's Ministry.
Clarke.
Boyle's Lectures.
Middleton.
Sir David Dalrymple.

CHAP. V.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THOSE lectures upon Scripture are properly called critical, which are intended to elucidate the meaning of a difficult passage, and to bring out from the words of an author the sense which is not obvious to an ordinary reader. The sources of this elucidation are, such emendations upon the reading or the punctuation as may warrantably be made, an analysis of the particular words, a close attention to the manner of the author, to the scope of his reasoning, and to the circumstances of those for whom he writes; and, lastly, a comparison of the passage, which is the subject of the criticism, with other passages in which the same matters are treated. There is great room for critical lectures of this kind, and my theological course abounds with specimens of them. Much has been done in this way since the beginning of the last century, by the application of sound criticism to the Holy Scriptures; and one great advantage to be derived from an intimate acquaintance with the learned languages, and from the habit of analyzing the authors who wrote in them, is, that you are thereby prepared for receiving that rational exposition of the word of God, which is the true foundation of theological knowledge.

There is another kind of critical lecture, which professes by a general comprehensive view of a passage of scripture, to illustrate some important points in the evidence or genius of our religion. This kind of lecture is applicable to those passages where there is not any obscurity in the expression, any recondite meaning, or any controverted doctrine, but where there is a number of circumstances scattered throughout, the force of which may be missed by a careless or ignorant reader, but which by be-

ing arranged and placed clearly in view, may be made to bear upon one point, so as to bring conviction to the understanding, at the same time that they minister to the improvement of the heart. The inimitable manner of Scripture, so natural and artless, yet so pregnant with circumstances the most delicate and the most instructive, affords numberless subjects of this kind of lecture; and I do not know any method so well calculated to give a person of taste and sensibility a deep impression of the excellency and the divinity of the Scriptures. One is tempted, by the peculiar fitness of the passages which occur to him, to adopt this mode of lecturing occasionally in speaking to an assembly of Christians, although it cannot be denied that the ordinary method of lecturing, by suggesting remarks from particular verses, is more adapted to that measure of understanding, of attention, and of memory, which is found in the generality of hearers.

But such a mode may here be followed with advantage; and I am led to give you now a specimen of this criticism upon the sense, rather than upon the words of an evangelist, because the eleventh chapter of John's Gospel may be stated in such a light as to illustrate much of what has been said with regard both to the internal evidence of Christianity, and to that branch of the external evidence which arises from miracles.

The eleventh chapter of John is the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, the greatest miracle which Jesus performed. Upon such a general view of the chapter as a critical lecture of this kind is meant to give, we are led to attend to that exhibition of character which the chapter contains—to the nature and circumstances of the miracle—and to the effects which the miracle produced.

I. The exhibition of character which this chapter contains is various, and our attention is directed to several very pleasing objects.

It is natural to speak first of the exhibition given of the character of the historian. The other evangelists have not mentioned this miracle, perhaps out of delicacy to Lazarus, who was alive when they wrote. They did not choose to expose the friend of their master to the fury of the Jews, by holding him forth in writings that were to go

through the world, as a monument of his power. But John, who lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, probably survived Lazarus; and there was every reason why this evangelist, who has preserved other miracles and discourses which the former historians had omitted, should record this event. It is a subject suited to the pen of John: the beloved disciple seems to delight in spreading it out; for he has coloured his narration with many beautiful circumstances, which unfold the characters of the other persons, and discover his intimate acquaintance with his master's heart. It is a striking instance of that strict propriety which pervades all the books of the New Testament, and which marks them to every discerning eye to be authentic writings, that the tenderest scenes in our Lord's life, those in which the warmth of his private affections is conspicuous, are recorded by this evangelist. From the others we learn his public life, the grace, the condescension, the benevolence which appeared in all his intercourse with those that had access to him. It was reserved to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to present to succeeding ages this divine person in his family, and amongst his friends. In his Gospel we see Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the last supper that he ate with them. It is John, the disciple that leaned on the bosom of Jesus while he sat at meat, who relates the long discourse in which, with the most delicate sensibility for their condition, he soothes the troubled heart of his disciples, spares their feelings, while he tells them the truth, and gives them his parting blessing. It is John, whom Jesus judged worthy of the charge, who records the filial piety with which, in the hour of his agony, he provided for the comfort of his mother; and it is John, whose soul was congenial to that of his Master, tender, affectionate, and feeling like his, who dwells upon all the particulars of the resurrection of Lazarus, brings forward to our view the sympathy and attention with which Jesus took part in the sorrows of those whom he loved, and making us intimately acquainted with them and with him, presents a picture at once delightful and instructive.

The next object in this exhibition of character is the friendship which Jesus entertained for the family of Lazarus. Bethany was a small village upon the mount of

Olives, within two miles of Jerusalem, in the road from Galilee. Jesus, who resided in Galilee, and went only occasionally to Jerusalem, was accustomed to lodge with Lazarus in his way to the public festivals: and we are led to suppose, from an incidental expression in Luke,* that during the festivals he went out to Bethany in the evening, and returned to Jerusalem in the morning. To this little family he retired from the fatigues of his busy life, from the disputations of the Jewish doctors, and the bitterness of his enemies; and being, like his brethren, compassed with infirmity, like his brethren also he found refreshment to his soul in the intercourse of those whom he loved. "Now Jesus," says John, "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." He loved the world; he loved the chief of sinners. That was a love of pity, the compassion which a superior being feels for the wretched. This was the love of kindness, the complacency which kindred spirits take in the society of one another. Of the brother he says to his apostles, with the same cordiality with which you would speak of one like yourselves, "Our friend Lazarus." And although we shall find the character of the two sisters widely different, yet he discerned in both a mind worthy of his friendship.

It appears strange to me, that any person who ever read this chapter can blame the Gospel, as some deistical writers in the last century were accustomed to do, for not recommending private friendship. Can there be a stronger recommendation than this picture of the Author of the Gospel, drawn by the hand of his beloved disciple? When you follow Jesus to Jerusalem, you may learn, from his public life, fortitude, diligence, wisdom. When you retire with him to Bethany, you may learn tenderness, confidence, and fellow-feeling, with those whom you choose as your friends. The servants of Jesus may not in every situation find persons so worthy of their friendship as this family; and there is neither duty nor satisfaction in making an improper choice. Many circumstances may appoint for individuals days of solitude, and therefore the universal religion of Jesus has wisely refrained from delivering a precept which it may often be impossible to

* Luke xxi. 37, 38.

obey. But they, who are able to follow the example of their master, by having a heart formed for friendship, and by meeting with those who are worthy of it, have found the medicine of life. Their happiness is independent of noise, and dissipation, and show; amidst the tumult of the world, their spirits enter into rest; and in the quiet, pleasing, rational intercourse of Bethany, they forget the strife of Jerusalem.

The next object in this exhibition is the character of the two sisters, painted in that most perfect and natural manner, which the Scriptures almost always adopt, by actions, not by words. As soon as Lazarus is sick, the two sisters send a message to Jesus, with entire confidence in his power to heal, and his willingness to come. He is now beyond Jordan; the countries of Samaria and Galilee lie between Bethany and his present abode. But the sisters of Lazarus knew too well his affection for their brother, and his readiness to do good, to think that distance would prevent his coming. They say no more than, "He whom thou lovest is sick," and they leave Jesus to interpret their wish. When Jesus arrives at Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, the different characters of the two sisters are supported with the most delicate discrimination, even under that pressure of grief which, in the hand of a coarse painter, would have obliterated every distinguishing feature. Martha, who had been "cumbered with much serving," when she had to entertain our Lord, rises with the same officious zeal from the ground, where she was sitting dishevelled and in sackcloth, amongst the friends who had come to comfort her. She rises the moment she hears by some chance messenger that Jesus is at hand, and runs to meet him. Mary, who had sat at the feet of Jesus, so much engaged with his discourse as not to think of providing for his entertainment, is incapable of so brisk an exertion, or thinks it more respectful to Jesus to wait his coming. This difference in the conduct of the two sisters is in the style of nature, according to which the particular temper, and feelings of particular persons, give a very great variety to the language of passion upon occasions equally interesting to all of them. A man may know, he ought to know, every corner in his own heart, how far any part of his conduct proceeds from the defect of good,

or the prevalence of wrong principles. But the most intimate acquaintance does not give him access to know all the notions of delicacy and propriety which may restrain or urge on others at particular seasons, and may give to their conduct, in the eye of careless observers, a very different appearance from that which they would wish; and it argues both an uncandid spirit, and very little knowledge of the world, to say or to think this man does not feel as he ought, because he does not express his feelings as I would express mine. Martha ran and met Jesus: Mary sat still in the house. When Martha comes to Jesus, there is in her first words a mixture of reproach for his delay, and of confidence in his kindness, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." A gleam of hope, indeed, shoots athwart the sorrowful mind of Martha at the sight of Jesus. But her wish was so great that she is afraid to mention it. "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" She has conceived a hope, in the state of her mind it was a wild hope, that her brother whom she had lost might be instantly restored. Jesus composes her spirit, prepares her for this gift, by recalling her thoughts from the general resurrection to himself, and probably gives her some sign or some direction, in consequence of which she goes to the house, and without alarming the Jews who were assembled there, says secretly to her sister, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." This message instantly rouses Mary. Her spirit, bowed down with grief, revives at his call, and without knowing, probably without conceiving the purpose for which he called her, she arose quickly and went to him. When she arrives, there is more submission in her manner than there had been in that of Martha. The marks are stronger of a depressed and afflicted spirit. She fell down at his feet, weeping. But, as if to remind us that we should look beyond these outward expressions, which being very much a matter of constitution, vary exceedingly in different persons, the evangelist puts the same words into the mouth of both, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and whatever interpretation we give to these words when they are spoken by the one sister, we cannot avoid giving them the same when they are spoken by the other. In this exhibition of the

manner of the two sisters there is so much of nature, and of nature appearing strongly in minute circumstances, as to be far superior to that truth of painting which we admire in a fancied picture, and to carry with it an internal evidence that John was a witness of what he describes, and that his drawing is part of a scene which, from the powerful, yet different emotions of the two sisters, had made a deep impression upon his feeling breast.

The next object which presents itself in this moral exhibition is the character of the Apostles. The Gospels present us with the most natural picture of the Apostles; their doubts, their fears, their slowness of apprehension and of belief. By circumstances that seem to be incidentally recorded, we see them feeling and acting, not indeed in the manner which would have occurred to a rude, unskilful hand, had he attempted to draw those who were honoured with being the companions of Jesus, but in the manner which any one intimately acquainted with the human heart will perceive to be the most natural for men of their condition and education, and situated as they were. We see them differing from one another in sentiments and conduct, with the same kind of variety which is observable amongst our neighbours and companions, each preserving in every situation his peculiar character, and all at the same time uniting in attachment to their master.

Although the companions of Jesus were interested in the fate of his friend Lazarus, yet they did not understand the hints which our Lord gave them. Although sleep is one of the most common images of death, they suppose when Jesus says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," that he was enjoying a refreshing sleep, by which nature was to work his cure; and not attending to the impropriety of Jesus going a long way to awake him out of such a sleep, they say, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well." When Jesus tells them plainly "Lazarus is dead," Thomas stands forth, and by one expression presents to us the same character which is more fully unfolded in another chapter of this Gospel."*

All the disciples were filled with sorrow and despair, when they saw their Master condemned, executed, and

* John xx. 9, 19, 20, 24—28.

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laid in the tomb. "For as yet," says John, "they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." At length, "Jesus came and stood in the midst of them." "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It happened that Thomas was not present. And when "the other disciples had said to him, we have seen the Lord," his answer was, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." About eight days after, Jesus condescended to give him this proof. "Reach hither," said he, "thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said, My Lord and my God." He had felt doubts, but his heart appears full of affection and reverence. Now, mark here the same Thomas. The disciples were alarmed at the danger of going back to Judea. They had tried to dissuade their Master, but they find him fixed in his purpose. "Lazarus is dead, nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas unto his fellow-disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him." You see here the same warmth of temper, the same firm determined mind which appeared at the other time, but you see also the same defect of faith. Thomas does not think it possible that Jesus could shelter himself from the Jews. He does not see any purpose that could be served by the journey. He thinks Jesus is going to throw away his life. Yet he resolves himself, and he encourages his fellow-disciples not to part with him. Our Master makes a sacrifice of his life. We have forsaken all and followed him. Let us follow him also in this journey; "let us go that we may die with him." It is the strong effort of a mind which loved and venerated Jesus, yet distrusted and did not know his divine power: Thomas faithless, yet affectionate and manly.

Such is the mixture of character which we often meet with in common life. They who are most intimately acquainted with the workings of the human heart, and who have observed most accurately the manners of those around them, will best perceive the truth of that picture which the Evangelists have drawn of themselves, and they will be struck with the force of that internal evidence for

the Gospel history which arises from this simple, natural record. We cannot attend to this picture without recollecting the divine power which, out of these feeble doubting men, raised the most successful instruments of spreading the religion of Jesus. There was no want of faith after the day of Pentecost. Thomas was one of that company which was assembled, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and he who now says, "Let us go and die with Jesus," with power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord.*

The principal object in this moral exhibition yet remains. It is Jesus himself. The striking feature throughout the whole is tenderness and love. But we discern also prudence, fortitude, and dignity; and this chapter may thus serve as a specimen of that most perfect and most difficult character, which the Apostles were incapable of conceiving, and which, had they conceived it, they would have been unable to support in every situation with such exact propriety, if they had not drawn it from the life.

After he receives the message from the sisters, he relieves himself from the importunity of his disciples, by an assurance which was sufficient to remove their anxiety, and he lingers for two days in the place where he was. The purpose of his lingering was, that Lazarus might be truly dead, that he might not merely recover a man who was sick, but that he might raise a man who had been in the grave. But this lingering did not proceed from indifference. Mark how beautifully the fifth verse is thrown in between the assurance given to the disciples, and the resolution to delay. He loved the family. He entered into their sorrows. His sympathy for them, indeed, yields to his prosecution of the great purpose for which he came, yet his love is not the less for delay. How tender and how soothing! The merciful High Priest, to whom Christians still send their requests, is not forgetful, although he does not instantly grant them. He loves and pities his own. But he does not think their time always the best. His own time for showing favour is set. No intervening circumstance can prevent its coming; and when it arrives, they themselves will acknowledge that it has been well

*Acts iv. 31, 33.

chosen, and all their sorrow will be forgotten and overpaid by the joy which is brought to their souls. One of the finest moral lessons is conveyed by this delay of Jesus. It is pleasing to act from kindness, compassion, and love. But the excess of good affections may sometimes mislead us; and there are considerations of prudence, of fidelity, and justice, which may give to the conduct of the most tender-hearted man an appearance of coldness and severity. The world may judge hastily in such instances. But let every man be satisfied in his own mind, first, that he has good affections; and next, that the considerations which sometimes restrain the exercise of them are such that he need not be ashamed of their influence.

It is strongly marked in this moral picture, that the delay of Jesus, although dictated by prudence, did not proceed from any consideration of his personal safety. For, when the disciples represented the danger of retiring to Judea, his answer is, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." His meaning is explained by other similar expressions. The Jews divided the day both in summer and winter into twelve hours, so that an hour with them marked, not as with us, a certain portion of time, but the twelfth part of a day, longer in summer, and shorter in winter. The time of his life upon earth was the day of Jesus, during which he had to finish the work given him to do. While this day continued, none of his enemies had power to take away his life, and he had nothing to fear in fulfilling the commandment of God. When this day ended, his work ended also; he fell indeed into the hands of his enemies; but he was ready to be offered up. And thus in the same picture Jesus is exhibited as gentle, feeling, compassionate to his friends, undaunted in the face of his enemies, assiduous and fearless in working the work of Him that sent him. There shines throughout the whole of this picture a dignity of manner; no indecent haste; no distrust of his own power; a delay, which rendered one work more difficult, yet which is not employed in preparing for an uncommon exertion. "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may

believe." He wishes to give his disciples a more striking manifestation of his divine power; and the display is made for their sakes, not for his own. With what awful solemnity does he unfold to Martha his exalted character in these words: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die;" and how suitably to the authority implied in that character does he require from Martha a confession of her faith in him! Yet how easily does he descend from this dignity to mingle his tears with those of his friends. "When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled:" and as they led him to the sepulchre, "Jesus wept." How amiable a picture of the Saviour of the world! He found upon earth an hospital full of the sound of lamentation, a dormitory in which some are every day falling asleep, and they who remain are mourning over those who to them are not. He hath brought a cordial to revive our spirits, while we are bearing our portion of this general sorrow, and he hath opened to our view a land of rest. But even while he is executing his gracious purpose, his heart is melted with the sight of that distress which he came to relieve, and although he was able to destroy the king of terrors, he was troubled when he beheld in the company of mourners a monument of his power. We do not read that Jesus ever shed tears for his own sufferings. When he was going to the cross, he turned round and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." But he wept over Jerusalem when he thought of the destruction that was coming upon it;* and here the anguish of his friends draws from him groans and tears. He was soon to remove their anguish. But it was not the less bitter during its continuance; and it is the present distress of his friends into which his heart enters thus readily.

Let the false pride of philosophy place the perfection of the human character in an equality of mind, unmoved by the events that befal ourselves or others. But Christians may learn from the example of him who was made like his brethren, that the variety in the events of life was intend-

* Luke xxiii. 28; xix. 41.

ed by the author of nature as an exercise of feeling; that it is no part of our duty to harden our heart against the impressions which they make, and that we need not be ashamed of expressing what we feel. That God who chastens his children loves a heart which is tender before him; and Jesus, who wept himself, commands us to weep with them that weep. The tears shed are both a tribute to the dead, and an amiable display of the heart of the living, and they interest every spectator in the persons from whom they flow.

Thus have we seen in this moral picture of the character of Jesus, tenderness, compassion, prudence, fortitude, dignity, "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God,"* the strength of an almighty arm displayed by a man like his brethren, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."† The assemblage of qualities is so uncommon, and the harmony with which they are blended so entire, that they convey to every intelligent reader an impression of the divinity of our religion, and we cannot contemplate this picture without feeling the sentiment which was afterwards expressed by the Centurion who stood over against the cross of Jesus: "Truly this was the Son of God."‡

II. Circumstances of the miracle.

Mr. Hume and other philosophers, both before and after his time, have denied the conclusiveness of the general argument from miracles, or they have endeavoured to destroy that evidence from testimony upon which we give credit to the works recorded in the Gospel. But there is a set of minute writers in the deistical controversy, who have adopted a style of philological or verbal objections, which would set aside the truth of the record, not by any general reasoning, but by supposed instances of inaccuracy or impropriety in particular narrations. This style of objections enters into ordinary conversation; it is level to the understanding of many, who are incapable of apprehending a general argument; and it is the usual refuge of those who have nothing else to oppose to the evidences of the Christian religion.

* 1 Cor. i. 24. † John i. 14. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 54.

You will find objections of this kind occasionally thrown out in many deistical writers. But they were formed into a sort of system in a treatise published about sixty years ago, by Mr. Woolston, and entitled, "Discourses upon the Miracles of our Saviour," a book now very little known, but which drew great attention at the time, and was overpowered by a variety of able answers. Mr. Woolston attempted to show that the earliest and most respectable writers of the Christian church understood the miracles of our Saviour purely in an allegorical sense, as emblems of the spiritual life; and that there was good reason for doing so, because the accounts taken in a literal sense are absurd and incredible. He has been convicted, by those who have answered him, of gross disingenuity in maintaining the first of his positions. It is true that the fathers, even of the first century, were led by their attachment to that philosophy in which they had been educated, to seek for hidden spiritual meanings in the plain historical parts of Scripture. And Origen, in the third century, went so far as to undervalue the literal sense in comparison with the allegorical, saying, "the Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written."* He has pursued this manner of interpreting the miracles of our Saviour much farther than became a sound reasoner. But although it appeared to him more sublime and instructive than a simple exposition of the facts recorded, yet it proceeds upon a supposition of the truth of the facts; and accordingly in his valuable work against Celsus the Jew, where he answers the objections to the truth of Christianity, and states with great force of reason the arguments upon which our faith rests, he appeals repeatedly to the miracles which Jesus did, which he enabled his apostles to do, and some faint traces of which remained in the days of Origen. He says that the miracles of Christ converted nations, and that it would have been absurd in the apostles to have attempted the introduction of a new religion without the help of miracles. Mr. Woolston, therefore, is left without the support of that authority which he pleads; for Origen, the most allegorical of the fathers, even where he prefers the allegorical, does not ex-

* Origen, Stromata, lib. x.

clude the literal sense; and his argumentative discourse proceeds upon the acknowledged truth of the facts recorded.

The second position does not profess to rest upon the authority of any name, but upon the nature of the narration, which, Mr. Woolston says, is so filled with monstrous incredibilities and absurdities, that the best way in which any person can defend it, is by having recourse to the allegorical sense. But, in this way, the argument from miracles is totally lost, because, if we regard them not as facts, but as a method of conveying spiritual instruction, the appeal which Jesus continually made to the works that he did, must appear to us chimerical or false. Although, therefore, Mr. Woolston has the effrontery to pretend a zeal for the honour of Jesus, in his attempts to get rid of the difficulties arising from the literal sense, that literal sense must be defended by every Christian.

It is impossible to lead you through all the objections which have been made by Woolston and other writers. But I shall point out the sources from which satisfying answers may be drawn, and give some specimens of the application of these sources.

The sources of answers are three: An intimate acquaintance with local manners, customs, and prejudices—an analysis of the true meaning of the words in the original—and a close attention to the whole contexture of the narration.

1. An intimate acquaintance with local manners, customs and prejudices. One of the most satisfying evidences of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, arises from their reference to the peculiarities of that country in which we say the authors of them lived, a reference so exact, so uniform, and extending to such minuteness, as to afford conviction to any person who considers it properly, that these are not the production of a later age or another country. This continual reference, while it is a proof of their authenticity, colours every narration contained in them with circumstances which appear strange to a reader who is not versant in Jewish antiquities; and this strangeness furnishes many objections to those who are themselves ignorant, or who wish to impose upon the ignorance of others. But the phantom is dissipated by

that local knowledge which may be easily acquired and easily applied.

2. An analysis of the words in the original. Particular objections against the miracles of Jesus are multiplied by this circumstance, that we read a narration of them, having a continual reference to ancient manners, not in the language in which it was originally written, but in a translation. For, allowing that translation all the praise that is due to it, and it deserves a great deal, still it must happen that the words in the translation do not always convey precisely the same meaning with those to which they correspond in the original. Different combinations of ideas, and different modes of phraseology diversify those words which answer the most exactly to one another in different languages; and although translations even under this disadvantage are sufficient to give every necessary information to those who are incapable of reading the original, yet we have experience, in reading all ancient authors, that the delicacy of a sentiment and the peculiar manner of an action may be so far lost by the words used in a translation, that there is no way of answering objections grounded upon the mode of exhibiting the sentiment or action, but by having recourse to the original.

3. A close attention to the whole contexture of the narration. Those who are forward to make objections are not disposed to compare the different parts of the narration, because it is not their business to find an answer. They choose rather to lay hold of particular expressions, and to give them the most exceptionable form, by presenting them in a detailed view. The beautiful simplicity of Scripture leaves it very much exposed to this kind of objections. When all the circumstances of a story are artfully arranged, so as to have a visible reference to one another, the manifest unfairness of attempting to present a part of the story disjointed from the rest betrays the design of a person who makes such an attempt. But when the circumstances are spread carelessly through the whole narration, inserted by the historian as they occurred to his observation or his recollection, without his seeming desirous to prepossess the readers with an opinion that the story is true, or aware that any objection could be raised to it in this natural manner, which is the manner of truth

and the manner of Scripture, it is easy to raise a variety of plausible objections; and a connected view of the whole is necessary in order to discern the futility of them.

From these three sources answers may be drawn to all the objections that have ever been made to the literal sense of the miracles of Jesus. To show their utility, I shall give a specimen of the application of them to some of the objections which Mr. Woolston has urged against three of the miracles of our Lord; the cure of the paralytic in the second chapter of Mark, the turning of water into wine at Cana, in the second chapter of John, and the resurrection of Lazarus in the eleventh chapter.

"And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay."*

Mr. Woolston says, in a mode of expression which he uses without any scruple, this is the most monstrously absurd, improbable, and incredible of any, according to the letter. If the people thronged so much that those who bore the paralytic could not get to the door, why did not they wait till the crowd was dismissed, rather than heave up the sick man to the top of the house with ropes and ladders, break up tiles, spars, and rafters, and make a hole large enough for the man and his bed to be let through, to the injury of the house, and the danger and annoyance of those who were within? A slight attention to the ordinary style of architecture in Judea, and to the words of the original, removes every appearance of absurdity in the narration. The houses in Judea were seldom more than two stories high, and the roofs were always flat, with a battlement or parapet round the edges, so that there was no danger in walking or pitching a tent, as was often done, upon the roof. There was a stair within the house, which

* Mark. ii. 1—4.

led to a door that lay flat when it was not opened, forming to all appearance a part of the roof, and was secured by a lock or bolt on the inside, to prevent its being readily opened by thieves. By this door the inhabitants of the house could easily get to the roof, and there was often a fixed stair leading to it from the outside, or where that was wanting, a short ladder was occasionally applied. Supposing, then, the house mentioned by Mark to have been built after this common fashion; the court before it so full, that it was not possible to get near the door of the house; the people so throng, and so earnest in listening, that it was vain to think of their giving place to any one; in this situation, the four persons who carried the palsied man upon a little couch, κλινιδιον, think of going round to another part of the house, at which by a stair or ladder they easily reach the roof. The find the door lying flat, and the word εξορυξαντες implies that some force was necessary to break it open. That force might have disturbed the family had they been quiet. But at present they are too much engaged to attend to it, or their knowledge of the purpose for which the force was used, prevents them from giving any interruption. The door being made to allow persons to come out upon the roof, and the couch being a κλινιδιον,* it would not be difficult for four men to let down the couch by the stair on the inside, two of them going before to receive it out of the hands of the others. After the couch is thus brought into the room where Jesus was, in the only method by which access could be found to him, he rewards the faith of the sick man by performing, in presence of his enemies, several of whom appear to have mingled with the multitude, an instantaneous and wonderful cure. The palsy is a disease seldom completely, never suddenly removed. The extreme degree in which it affected this man was known to the four who carried him, to the multitude in the midst of whom he was laid, to all the inhabitants of Capernaum. Yet by a word from the mouth of Jesus, he is enabled to rise up and carry his couch. Judge from this simple exposition, whether the narrative of Mark deserves to be called monstrously absurd and incredible.

* Luke v. 19, 24.

The turning of water into wine is recorded in the second chapter of John. The only objection to this miracle, which merits consideration, is the offence conceived by Mr. Woolston at the expression which our Lord uses to his mother. And I doubt not that it sounds harsh in the ears of every English reader. "When they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine; Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Here an analysis of the words in the original appears to me to afford a satisfying answer to the objection. I need scarcely remark, that γυνη is the word by which women of the highest rank were addressed in ancient times by men of the most polished manners, when they wished to show them every mark of respect. It is used by Jesus, when with filial affection, in his dying moments, he provides every soothing attention for his mother. The phrase τι εμοι και σοι occurs in some places of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, and also in the New Testament. It is uniformly rendered "What have I to do with thee?" and seems to mark a check, a slight reprimand, a degree of displeasure. It was not unnatural for our translators to give the Greek phrase the same sense here; and many commentators understand our Lord as checking his mother for directing him in the exercise of his divine power. I do not think that such a check would have been inconsistent with that tender concern for his mother which our Lord showed upon the cross. It became him, who was endowed with the Spirit without measure, to be led by that Spirit in the discharge of his public office, and not to commit himself to the narrow conceptions of any of the children of men. I do not therefore find fault with those who understand Jesus as saying, the time of attesting my commission by miracles is not come, and I cannot receive directions from you when it should begin. This may be the meaning of the words. But as they will easily bear another translation, perfectly consistent with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I am inclined to prefer it. "What is that to thee and me? The want of wine is a matter that concerns the master of the feast. But it need not distress you; and my friends cannot accuse me of unkindness in withholding an exercise of my power, that may be convenient for them;

for I have yet done no miracle, the season of my public manifestation not being come." We know that Jesus did not enter upon his ministry till after John was cast into prison. We find John, in the next chapter, baptizing near Salim, and this is called the beginning of miracles. According to this translation, every appearance of harshness is avoided, and the whole story hangs perfectly together. You will observe, Mary was so far from being offended at the supposed harshness of the answer, or conceiving it to be a refusal, that she says to the servants, "Whatever he saith unto you, do it:" and our Lord's doing the miracle after this answer, is a beautiful instance of his attention to his mother. Although his friends had no reason to expect an interposition of his power, because his hour was not come, yet, in compliance with her desire, he supplies plentifully what is wanting.

To the resurrection of Lazarus, in the eleventh chapter of John, Mr. Woolston objects, that the person raised was not a man of eminence sufficient to draw attention—that he gives no account of what he saw in the separate state —that it was absurd in Jesus to call with a loud voice to a dead man—that Lazarus having his head bound is suspicious—and that the whole is a romantic story. Now the answer to all this is to be drawn from the contexture of the narrative, in which, beautiful, simple, and tender as it is, there are interwoven such circumstances as can leave no doubt upon the mind of any person who admits the authenticity of this book, that the greatest of miracles was here really performed. Instead, therefore, of following the frivolous objections of Mr. Woolston one by one, I shall present you with a connected view of these circumstances, as a specimen of the manner in which the credibility of other miracles may be illustrated.

Jesus lingered in the place where he was, when he received the message from the sisters, till the time when, by the divine knowledge that he possessed, he said to the apostles, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." After this, he had a long journey to Bethany; and it does not appear that he performed it hastily, for he learned, as he approached the village, that Lazarus had lain four days in the grave. He delayed so long, that the divine power, which he was to exert in the resurrection of Lazarus, might be

magnified in the eyes of the spectators; and, at the same time, he provided an unquestionable testimony for the truth of the miracle, by arriving before the days of mourning were expired. You will be sensible of the effect of this circumstance, if you attend for a moment to the manners of the Jews respecting funerals. One of the greatest calamities in human life is the death of those persons whose society had been our comfort and joy. It has been the practice of all countries to testify the sense of this calamity by honours paid to the dead, and by expressions of grief on the part of the living. In eastern countries, where all the passions are strong, and agitate the frame more than in our northern climates, these expressions of grief are often exceedingly violent; and, notwithstanding some wise prohibitions of the law of Moses, the mourning in the land of Judea was more expressive of anguish than that which we commonly see. The dead body was carried out to burial not long after the death. But the house in which the person had died, the furniture of the house, and all who had been in it at that time, became in the eye of the law unclean for seven days. During that time, the near relations of the deceased remained constantly in the house, unless when they went to the grave or sepulchre to mourn over the dead. They did not perform any of the ordinary business of life; they were not considered as in a proper condition for attending the service of the temple, and their neighbours and acquaintances, for these seven days, came to condole with them, bringing bread and wine and other victuals, as there was nothing in the house which could lawfully be used. Upon this charitable errand, a number of Jews, inhabitants of Jerusalem, had come out to Bethany, which was within two miles of the city, upon the day when Jesus arrived there; and thus, as we found the sisters brought out to the sepulchre one after another, by the most natural display of character, so here, without any appearance of a divine interposition, but merely by their following the dictates of good neighbourhood or of decency, the enemies of Jesus are gathered together to be the witnesses of this work. When the Jews saw Mary rise hastily and go out, after the private message which Martha brought her, knowing that she could not go anywhere but to the sepulchre, they naturally arose to fol-

low her, that they might restrain the extravagance of her grief, and assist in composing her spirit and bringing her home. They found Jesus in the highway where Martha had first met him, groaning in spirit at the distress of the family, and soothing Mary's complaint by this kindly question, "Where have ye laid him?" a question which showed his readiness to take part in her sorrow, by going with her to the house of the dead. The Jews answer his question, "Lord, come and see;" and Jesus suffers himself to be led by them, that they might see there was no preparation for the work he was about to perform, when he stepped out of the highway along with them, and allowed them to reach the sepulchre before him. His tears draw the attention of the crowd as he approaches the place; and the Evangelist has presented to us, in their different remarks, that variety of character which we discover in every multitude. The candid and feeling admired this testimony of his affection for Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him!" Others, who pretended to more sagacity, argued from the grief of Jesus, that, in the death of Lazarus, he had met with a disappointment which he would have prevented if he could. Jesus, without making any reply to either remark, arrives at the grave. John, who wrote his Gospel at a distance from Jerusalem, for the benefit of those who were strangers to Jewish manners, has given a short description of the grave, which we must carry along with us. The Jews, especially persons of distinction, were generally laid, not in such graves as we commonly see, but in caves hewn in the rocks, with which the land of Judea abounded. Sometimes the sepulchre was in part above the ground, having a door, like that in which our Lord lay. Sometimes it was altogether below ground, having an aperture from which a stair led down to the bottom, and this aperture covered with a stone, except when the sepulchre was to be opened. The body, swathed in linen, with the feet and hands tightly bound, and the whole face covered by a napkin, was laid, not in a coffin, but in a niche or cell of the sepulchre. As the Jews, at the command of Jesus, were attempting to take away the stone, Martha seems to stagger in the faith which she had formerly expressed. "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been *dead* four days," τεταρταιος γαρ

ιστι. The word means, that he has been four days in some particular condition, without expressing what condition is meant. Now, his present condition is, being in the cave. It was mentioned before, that he had been there four days, and therefore our translators should have inserted in italics the word *buried*, not the word *dead*. Jesus revives the faith of Martha; and as soon as the stone is removed, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and thanks the Father for having heard him. His enemies said that he did his mighty works by the assistance of the devil. Here, in the act of performing the greatest of them, he prays, with perfect assurance of being heard, ascribes the honour to God, and takes to himself the name of the messenger of heaven. Think of the suspense and earnest attention of the multitude, while after the sepulchre is opened Jesus is uttering this solemn prayer. How would the suspense be increased, when Jesus, to show the whole multitude that the resurrection of Lazarus was his deed, calls with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And what would be their astonishment when they saw this command instantly obeyed; the man, who had lain four days in the sepulchre, sliding his limbs down from the cell, and standing before it, upright! The bandages prevent him from moving forward. But Jesus, by ordering the Jews to loose him, gives them a nearer opportunity of examining this wonderful sight, and of deriving, from the dress of his body, from the state of the grave-clothes, from the manner in which the napkin smothered his face, various convincing proofs, that the man, whom they now saw and touched alive, had been truly numbered among the dead.

The contexture of this narration is such as to efface from our minds every objection against the consistency of it; and the greatness of the miracle is obvious. We behold in this work the Lord of Life. None can restore a man who had seen corruption, but He who in the beginning created him. Jesus gives us here a sample of the general resurrection, and a sensible sign that he is able to deliver from the second death. This is the meaning of that expression, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," ου μη αποθανη εις τον αιωνα; *i. e.* shall not die for ever. Natural death is the separation of soul and body; eternal death is the loss, the degradation, and final

wretchedness of the soul. Both are the wages of sin, and Jesus delivers from the first, which is visible, as a pledge of his being able to deliver, in due time, those who live and believe in him, from the second also. The miracle is in this way stated by himself, both as a confirmation of his mission, and as an illustration of the great doctrine of his religion.

Before leaving the circumstances of the miracle I would observe, that however ably such objections as I have mentioned may be answered, there is much caution to be used in stating them to a Christian assembly. It is very improper to communicate to the people all the extravagant frivolous conceits that have been broached by the enemies of Christianity. The objection may remain with them after they have forgotten the answer; and their faith may be shaken by finding that it has received so many attacks. It becomes the ministers of religion, indeed, to possess their minds with a profound knowledge of the evidences of Christianity, and of the answers that may be made to objections. But out of this storehouse they should bring forth to the people a clear unembarrassed view of every subject upon which they speak, so as to create no doubt or suspicion in those who hear them, but to give their faith that stability which is always connected with distinct apprehension.

III. It remains to say a few words upon the effects which this miracle produced. Some of the persons who had come to comfort Mary, when they saw "the things which Jesus did, believed on him." It was the conclusion of right reason, that a man who, in the sight of a multitude, exerted, without preparation, a power to which no human exertion deserves to be compared, was a messenger of heaven. It was the conclusion of an enlightened and unprejudiced Jew, that this extraordinary person, appearing in the land of Judea, was the Messiah, whose coming was to be distinguished by signs and wonders. The chosen people of God, who "waited for the consolation of Israel," found in this miracle the most striking marks of him that should come. The conclusion seems to arise naturally out of the premises. Yet it was not drawn by all. Many believed, "but some went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done" They knew the

enmity which these leading men entertained against him. They were afraid of incurring their anger by appearing to be his disciples; they hoped to obtain their favour by informing against him; and, sacrificing their conviction to this fear and this hope, they go from the sepulchre of Lazarus, where with astonishment they had seen the power of Jesus, to inflame the minds of his enemies by a recital of the deed. And what do these enemies do? They could not entertain a doubt of the fact. It was told them by witnesses who had no interest in forging or exaggerating miracles ascribed to Jesus. The place was at hand; inquiry was easy; and the imposture, had there been any, could not have remained hidden at Jerusalem for a day. The Pharisees, therefore, in their deliberations, proceed upon the fact as undeniable. "This man does many miracles." But, from mistaken views of political expediency, the result of their deliberation is, "They take counsel together to put him to death."

There is thus furnished a satisfactory answer to a question that has often been asked, If Jesus really did such miracles, how is it possible that any who saw them could remain in unbelief? Many, we are told, did believe; and here is a view of the motives which indisposed others for attending to the evidence which was exhibited to them, and even determined them to reject it. You cannot be surprised at the influence which such motives exerted at that time, because the like influence of similar motives is a matter of daily observation. The evidence upon which we embrace Christianity is not the same which the Jews had; but it is sufficient. All the parts of it have been fully illustrated; every objection has received an apposite answer; the gainsayers have been driven out of every hold which they have tried to occupy; the wisest and most enlightened men in every age have admitted the evidence, and "set to their seal that God is true." Yet it is rejected by many. Pride, false hopes, or evil passions, detain them in infidelity. They ask for more evidence. They say they suspect collusion, enthusiasm, credulity. But the example of those Jews, who went their ways to the Pharisees, may satisfy you that there is no defect in the evidence, and that there is the most literal truth in our Lord's declaration, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, nei-

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ther will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

The different effects, which the same religious truths and the same religious advantages produce upon different persons, afford one instance of a state of trial. God is now proving the hearts of the children of men, drawing them to himself by persuasion, by that moral evidence which is enough to satisfy, not to overpower. Faith in this way becomes a moral virtue. A trial is taken of the goodness and honesty of the heart. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The same seed of the word is scattered by the blessed sower in various soils, and the quality of the soil is left to appear by the produce.

Pierce's Commentary.

CHAP. VI.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY—PROPHECY.

HAD Jesus appeared only as a messenger of heaven, the points already considered might have finished the defence of Christianity, because we should have been entitled to say that miracles such as those recorded in the Gospel, transmitted upon so unexceptionable a testimony, and wrought in support of a doctrine so worthy of God, are the complete credentials of a divine mission. But the nature of that claim which is made in the Gospel requires a further defence: for it is not barely said that Jesus was a messenger from heaven, but it is said that he was the Messiah of the Jews, "the prophet that should come into the world."* John, his forerunner, marked him out as the Christ.† He himself, in his discourses with the Jews, often referred to their books, which he said wrote of him.‡ Before his ascension, he expounded to his disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.§ They went forth after his death declaring that they said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come;‖ and in all their discourses and writings they held forth the Gospel as the end of the law, the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham, the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers.

If the Gospel be a divine revelation, these allegations must be true; for it is impossible that a messenger from heaven can advance a false claim. Although, therefore, the nature of the doctrine, and the confirmation which it receives from miracles, might have been sufficient to establish our faith, had no such claim been made; yet, as Jesus has chosen to call himself the Messiah of the Jews, it

* John iv. 26; vi. 14. † John i. 29—31. ‡ John v. 39, 46.
§ Luke xxiv. 27. ‖ Acts xxvi. 22.

is incumbent upon Christians to examine the correspondence between that system contained in the books of the Jews, and that contained in the New Testament; and their faith doth not rest upon a solid foundation, unless they can satisfy their minds that the characters of the Jewish Messiah belong to Jesus. It is to be presumed that he had wise reasons for taking to himself this name, and that the faith of his disciples will be very much strengthened by tracing the connexion between the two dispensations. But the nature and the force of the argument from prophecy will unfold itself in the progress of the investigation; and it is better to begin with attending to the facts upon which the argument rests, and the steps which lead to the conclusion, than to form premature conceptions of the amount of this part of the evidence for Christianity.

SECTION I.

In every investigation it is of great importance to ascertain precisely the point from which you set out, that there may be no danger of confounding the points that are assumed, with those that are to be proven. There is much reason for making this remark in entering upon the subject which we are now to investigate, because attempts have been made to render it confused and inextricable, by mis-stating the manner in which the investigation ought to proceed. Mr. Gibbon, speaking of that argument from prophecy, which often occurs in the apologies of the primitive Christians, calls it an argument beneath the notice of philosophers. "It might serve," he says, "to edify a Christian, or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of the prophets, and both are obliged with devout reverence to search for their sense and accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence, when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation, or the prophetic spirit."* Mr. Gibbon learned to use this supercilious inaccurate language from Mr.

* Gibbon's Roman History, chap. xv.

Collins, an author of whom I shall have occasion to speak fully before I finish the discussion of this subject, and who lays it down as the fundamental position of his book, that Christianity is founded upon Judaism, and from thence infers that the Gentiles ought regularly to be converted to Judaism before they can become Christians. The object of the inference is manifest. It is to us, in these later ages, a much shorter process to attain a conviction of the truth of Christianity, than to attain, without the assistance of the Gospel, a conviction of the divine origin of Judaism: and, therefore, if it be necessary that we become converts to Judaism before we become Christians, the evidence of our religion is involved in numberless difficulties, and the field of objection is so much extended, that the adversaries of our faith may hope to persuade the generality of mankind that the subject is too intricate for their understanding. The design is manifest; but nothing can be more loose or fallacious than the statement which is employed to accomplish this design. In order to perceive this you need only attend to the difference between a Jew and a Gentile in the conduct of this investigation. A Jew, who respects the Mosaic dispensation and the prophetic spirit, looks for the fulfilment of those prophecies which appear to him to be contained in his sacred books, and when any person declares that these prophecies are fulfilled in him, the Jew is led, by that respect, to compare the circumstances in the appearance of that person with what he accounts the right interpretation of the prophecies, and to form his judgment whether they be fulfilled. A Gentile, to whom the divinity of the prophecies was formerly unknown, but who hears a person declaring that they are fulfilled in him, if he is disposed by other circumstances to pay any respect to what that person says, will be led, by that respect, to inquire after the books, in which these prophecies are said to be contained, will compare the appearance of that person with what is written in these books, and will judge from this comparison how far they correspond. Both the Jew and the Gentile may be led, by this comparison, to a firm conviction that the messenger, whose character and history they examine, is the person foretold in the prophecies. Yet the Jew set out with the belief that the prophecies are divine; the Gentile only attained that belief

in the progress of the examination. It is not possible, then, that a previous belief of the divinity of the prophecies is necessary in order to judge of the fulfilment of them; for two men may form the same judgment in this matter, the one of whom from the beginning had that belief, and the other had it not.

The true point, from which an investigation of the fulfilment of prophecy must commence, is this, that the books, containing what is called the prophecy, existed a considerable time before the events which are said to be the fulfilment of it. I say, a considerable time, because the nearer that the first appearance of these books was to the event, it is the more possible that human sagacity may account for the coincidence, and the remoter the period is, to which their existence can be traced, that account becomes the more improbable. Let us place ourselves, then, in the situation of those Gentiles whom the first preachers of the Gospel addressed; let us suppose that we know no more about the books of the Jews than they might know, and let us consider how we may satisfy ourselves as to the preliminary point upon which the investigation must proceed.

The prophecies, to which Jesus and his apostles refer, did not proceed from the hands of obscure individuals, and appear in that suspicious form which attends every prediction of an unknown date and a hidden origin. They were presented to the world in the public records of a nation; they are completely incorporated with these records, and they form part of a series of predictions which cannot be disjoined from the constitution and history of the state. This nation, however singular in its religious principles, and in what appeared to the world to be its political revolutions, was not unknown to its neighbours. By its geographical situation, it had a natural connexion with the greatest empires of the world. War and commerce occasionally brought the flourishing kingdom of Judea into their view; and, although repugnant in manners and in worship, they were witnesses of the existence and the peculiarities of this kingdom. The captivity, first of the ten tribes by Salmanazar, afterwards of the two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar, served still more to draw the attention of the world, many centuries before the birth

of Christ, to the peculiarities of Jewish manners. And there was a circumstance in the return of the two tribes from captivity, which was to those who observed it in ancient times, and is to us at this day, a singular and unquestionable voucher of the early existence of their books. Nehemiah was appointed by the king of Persia to superintend the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. He had received much opposition in this work from Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, that district of Palestine which the ten tribes had inhabited, and into which the king of Assyria had, at the time of their captivity, transplanted his own subjects. The work, however, was finished, and Nehemiah proceeded in making the regulations which appeared to him necessary for maintaining order, and the observance of the law of Moses amongst the multitude whom he had gathered into Jerusalem. Some of these regulations were not universally agreeable; and Manasseh, a son of the high priest, who had married a daughter of Sanballat, fled at the head of the malcontent Jews into Samaria. The law of Moses was not acknowledged in Samaria, for the king of Assyria, after the first captivity, had sent a priest to instruct those whom he planted there, in the worship of the God of the country, and for some time they had offered sacrifices to idols in conjunction with the true God. But Manasseh, emulous of the Jews whom he had left, and considering the honour of a descendant of Aaron as concerned in the purity of worship which he established in his new residence, prevailed upon the inhabitants to put away their idols, built a temple to the God of Israel upon Mount Gerizim, and introduced a copy of the law of Moses, or the Pentateuch. He did not introduce any of the later books of the Old Testament, lest the Samaritans, observing the peculiar honours with which God had distinguished Jerusalem, "the place which he had chosen, to put his name there," should entertain less reverence for the temple of Gerizim. And as a farther mark of distinction, Manasseh had the book of the law written for the Samaritans, not in the Chaldee character, which Ezra had adopted in the copies of the law which he made for the Jews, to whom that language had become familiar during the captivity, but in the old Samaritan character. During the successive fortunes of the Jewish nation, the

Samaritans continued to reside in their neighbourhood, worshipping the same God, and using the same law. But between the two nations there was that kind of antipathy, which, in religious differences, is often the more bitter, the less essential the disputed points are, and which, in this case, proceeded so far that the Jews and Samaritans not only held no communion in worship, but had "no dealings with one another."

Here then are two rival tribes stated in opposition and enmity five hundred years before Christ, yet acknowledging and preserving the same laws, as if appointed by Providence to watch over the corruptions which either might be disposed to introduce, and to transmit to the nations of the earth, pure and free from suspicion, those books in which Moses wrote of Jesus. The Samaritan Pentateuch is often quoted by the early fathers. After it had been unknown for a thousand years, it was found by the industry of some of those critics who lived at the beginning of the seventeenth century, amongst the remnant who still worship at Gerizim. Copies of it were brought into Europe, and the learned have now an opportunity of comparing the Samaritan text used by the followers of Manasseh, with the Hebrew or Chaldee text used by the Jews.

While this ancient schism thus furnished succeeding ages with jealous guardians of the Pentateuch, the existence and integrity of all their Scriptures were vouched by another event in the history of the Jews.

Alexander the Great, in the progress of his conquests, either visited the land of Judea, or received intelligence concerning the Jews. His inquisitive mind, which was no stranger to science, and which was intent upon great plans of commerce not less than of conquest, was probably struck with the peculiarities of this ancient people; and when he founded his city Alexandria, he invited many of the Jews to settle there. The privileges which he and his successors conferred upon them, and the advantages of that situation, multiplied the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria; and the constant intercourse of trade obliged them to learn the Greek language, which the conquerors of Asia had introduced through all the extent of the Macedonian empire. Retaining the religion and manners of

Judea, but gradually forgetting the language of that country, they became desirous that their Scriptures, the canon of which was by this time complete, should be translated into Greek; and it was especially proper that there should be a translation of the Pentateuch for the use of the synagogue, where a portion of it was read every Sabbath-day. We have the best reason for saying that that translation of the Old Testament, which, from an account of the manner of its being made, probably in many points fabulous, has received the name of the Septuagint, was begun at Alexandria about two hundred and eighty years before Christ; and we cannot doubt that the whole of the Pentateuch was translated at once. Learned men have conjectured, indeed, from a difference of style, that the other parts of the Old Testament were translated by other hands. But it is very improbable that a work, so acceptable to the numerous and wealthy body of Jews who resided at Alexandria, would receive any long interruption after it was begun; and a subsequent event in the Jewish history appears to fix a time when a translation of the prophets would be demanded. About the middle of the second century before Christ, Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, committed the most outrageous acts of wanton cruelty against the whole nation of the Jews; and as he contended with the king of Egypt for the conquest of Palestine, we may believe that the Jews of Alexandria shared the fate of their brethren, as far as the power of Antiochus could reach them. Amongst other edicts which he issued, he forbade any Jews to read the law of Moses in public. As the prohibition did not extend to the prophets, the Jews began at this time to substitute portions of the prophets instead of the law. After the heroical exploits of the Asmonæan family, the Maccabees, had delivered their country from the tyranny of Antiochus, and restored the reading of the law, the prophets continued to be read also; and we know that, before the days of our Saviour, reading both the law and the prophets was a stated part of the synagogue service. In this way the whole of the Septuagint translation came to be used in the churches of the Hellenistical Jews scattered through the Grecian cities; and we are told it was used in some of the synagogues of Judea.

When Rome, then, entered into an alliance with the princes of the Asmonæan line, who were at that time independent sovereigns, and when Judea, experiencing the same fate with the other allies of that ambitious republic, was subdued by Pompey about sixty years before the birth of our Saviour, the books of the Jews were publicly read in a language which was then universal. The diffusion of the Jews through all parts of the Roman empire, and the veneration in which they held their Scriptures, conspired to assure the heathen that such books existed, and to spread some general knowledge of their contents: and even could we suppose it possible for a nation so zealous of the law, and so widely scattered as the Jews were, to enter into a concert for altering their Scriptures, we must be sensible that insuperable difficulties were thrown in the way of such an attempt, by the animosity between the religious sects which at that time flourished in Judea. The Sadducees and the Pharisees differed upon essential points respecting the interpretation and extent of the law; they were rivals for reputation and influence; there were learned men upon both sides, and both acknowledged the authority of Moses; and thus, as the Samaritans and the Jews in ancient times were appointed of God to watch over the Pentateuch; so, in the ages immediately before our Saviour, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were faithful guardians of all the ancient Scriptures.

Such is the amount of that testimony to the existence of their sacred books, long before the days of our Saviour, with which the Jews, a nation superstitiously attached to their law, widely spread, and strictly guarded, present them to the world; and to this testimony there are to be added the many internal marks of authenticity which these books exhibit to a discerning reader,—the agreement of the natural, the civil, and the religious history of the world, with those views which they present—the incidental mention that profane writers have made of Jewish customs and peculiarities, which is always strictly conformable to the contents of these books—the express reference to many of them that occurs in the New Testament, a reference which must have destroyed the credit of the Gospels and Epistles, if the books referred to had not been known to have a previous existence—and, lastly,

the evidence of Josephus, the Jewish historian, a man of rank and of science, who may be considered as a contemporary of Jesus, and who has given in his works a catalogue of the Jewish books, not upon his own authority, but upon the authority and ancient conviction of his nation, a catalogue which agrees both in number and in description with the books of the Old Testament that we now receive. Even Daniel, the only writer of the Old Testament against the authenticity of whose book any special objections have been offered, is styled by Josephus a prophet, and is extolled as the greatest of the prophets; and his book is said by this respectable Jew to be a part of the canonical Scriptures of his nation.*

It appears from laying all these circumstances together, that as our Lord and his apostles had a title to assume, in their addresses to the Gentiles, the previous existence of the Jewish Scriptures as a fact generally and clearly known, so no doubt can be reasonably entertained of this fact, even in the distant age in which we live. I do not speak of these Scriptures as a divine revelation; I abstract entirely from that sacred authority which the Christian religion communicates to them; I speak of them merely as an ancient book; and I say, that while there is no improbability in the remote date which any part of this book claims, there is real satisfying evidence, to which no degree of scepticism can justify any man for refusing his assent, that all the parts had an existence, and might have been known in the world, some centuries before the Christian era.

Having thus satisfied our minds of the previous existence of those Scriptures, to which Jesus appeals as containing characters of the Messiah which are fulfilled in him, it is natural, before we examine his appeal, to inquire whether the nation, who have transmitted these Scriptures, entertained any expectation of such a person. For although it be possible that they might be ignorant of the full meaning of the oracles committed to them, and that a great Prophet might explain to the nations of the earth that true sense which the keepers of these oracles did not understand, yet his appeal would be received with more

* Joseph. lib. x. cap. 11, 12.

attention, and even with a prejudice in its favour, if it accorded with the hopes of those who had the best access to know the grounds of it. Now, it is admitted upon all hands, that at the time of our Saviour's birth there was in the land of Judea the most earnest expectation, and the most assured hope, that an extraordinary personage, to whom the Jews gave the name of Messiah, was to arise. We read in the New Testament, that many looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and waited for the consolation of Israel; that when John appeared, all men mused in their hearts whether he was the Christ, and the priests and Levites sent messages to ask him, Art thou that prophet? that the conclusion which the people drew from some of the first of our Lord's miracles was, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world;" and that the expectation of this person had spread to other countries; for wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, in search of him who was to be born King of the Jews.* You will not think it unfair reasoning to quote these passages from the New Testament in proof of the expectation of a Messiah; for it is impossible that the books which refer in such marked terms to a sentiment so universal and strong, could have been received by any inhabitant of Judea, if that sentiment had no existence; and the inference, which we are thus entitled to draw from the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, is confirmed in every way that the nature of the case admits of, by historians who write of these times, by the books of the ancient Jews, and the sentiments of the modern. Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus, although desirous to flatter the Roman emperor Vespasian, by applying the prophecies to him, yet unite in attesting the expectation which these prophecies had raised. Josephus says, "That which chiefly excited the Jews to war, was an ambiguous prophecy found in the sacred books, that at that time some one within their country should arise, that should obtain the empire of the world. For this they had received by tradition, that it was spoken of one of their nation, and many wise men were deceived with the interpretation. But, in truth, Vespasian's empire was designed in this prophecy,

* Luke ii. and iii.; John i. and vi.; Matt. ii.

who was created emperor in Judea."* Josephus, although he affects in this place, (he speaks otherwise elsewhere,) to condemn that interpretation of the prophecy which led the Jews to expect a Messiah, yet acknowledges that this expectation was general, derived from the prophecies, and entertained by many of the wise. Suetonius says, "Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judææ profecti rerum potirentur. Id de imperatore Romano, quantum postea eventu patuit, prædictum, Judæi ad se trahentes, rebellârunt."† Tacitus says, "Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur. Quæ ambages Vespasianum ac Titum prædixerant. Sed Vulgus, more humanæ cupidinis, sibi tantam fatorum magnitudinem interpretati, ne adversis quidem ad vera mutabantur."‡ Both historians, with that very *cupido* which they charge upon the Jews, apply the prophecy to a Roman emperor; an application which, at the time, was most unnatural, and which the event has clearly shown to be false. But both bear witness to the existence and antiquity of the prophecy, and to the universality and strength of the expectation grounded upon it. The oldest Rabbinical books extant are the Targum of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, and the Targum of Jonathan on the Prophets; Targums, *i. e.* interpretations or paraphrases of books of the Old Testament, composed for the instruction of the people, and used in the synagogues. There are many more modern Targums. But these two, Onkelos and Jonathan, are said by the Jews to have been written before or about the time of our Saviour, and they appear to be collections from more ancient books. They continued always in the hands of the Jews; they were not known to the Christians till a few centuries ago, yet they uniformly bear testimony to the national expectation of a Messiah, and mark out the prophecies which had produced that expectation. Even the Samaritans, who had only the Pentateuch, entertained the same expectation with the Jews. "I know," said the Samaritan woman, in the Gospel of John, "that Messias

* Jos. Hist. vi. 31.
† Suet. Vespas. vi. 8.
‡ Tacit. Hist. lib. v. 9.

cometh. When he is come, he will tell us all things."* And it deserves to be mentioned, that those learned men, who, in the beginning of the 17th century, introduced the Samaritan Pentateuch into Europe, obtained also from the remnant which still worships upon Mount Gerizim, a declaration of their faith concerning the Messiah. "You would know," they say, in a letter which is extant, "whether the Messias be come, and whether it be he that is promised in our law as the Shiloh. Know that the Messias is not yet risen. But he shall rise, and his name shall be Hathab." It is well known that the modern Jews still retain hopes that the Messiah will come. They have devised various schemes to account for his delay, and to elude the argument which we draw from the application of the prophecies to Jesus. But even their modern doctors declare, that he who believes the law of Moses should believe the coming of the Messiah; for the law commands us to believe in the prophets, and the prophets foretel his coming.

This much, then, we have gained by attending to the sentiments of the Jews—satisfying evidence that it was not an invention of our Lord and his apostles, to say, that Moses wrote of the Messiah; that Abraham rejoiced to see his day; that David, being a prophet, foresaw him in spirit; and that all the prophets, from Samuel, foretold of his days. The Jews said the same thing, and looked for the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers. How ancient this expectation was we cannot say, because except the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we have no Jewish books of unquestionable authority older than the days of our Saviour. But as it is clear that the expectation was not at that time new, as the first of the Jewish books extant declare, that all the prophets, from Moses to Malachi, prophesied only of the Messiah, and abound with explications of particular predictions, and as the most ancient prayers of the people in their synagogues adopt these explications, speaking of the Messiah under the names and characters ascribed to him in the predictions, it does not seem to admit of a doubt, that the hope of the Messiah was, in all ages among the Jews, the re-

* John iv. 25.

ceived national interpretation of those predictions in which they gloried.

The matter, then, is brought to a short issue. Certain books existed some centuries before the birth of Jesus, which raised in the nation that kept them a general expectation of an extraordinary personage. Jesus appeared in Judea, claiming to be that personage. The people, in whose possession the books had always remained, are bound by their national expectations to examine his claim. The curiosity of the other nations to whom this claim is made known, or to whom the person advancing it appears upon other accounts respectable, is excited by the coincidence between the claim, and the expectations of that people upon whose ancient books it is founded: and thus both Jews and Gentiles, without any previous agreement in religious opinions, are called to attend to the same object, and one point is submitted to their examination; Whether the predictions concerning the Jewish Messiah apply to the circumstances in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth.

SECTION II.

THE obvious method of proving that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews is to compare the predictions in their Scriptures with the circumstances of his appearance. It is impossible, in any other way, to attain a conviction of the justness of his claim to that character: and it is clear, that if his claim be well founded, this method will be sufficient to ascertain it. This is the method which our Lord prescribed to the Jews. "Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me." It is the method which he employed when, before his ascension, "he expounded to his disciples the things which were written concerning him in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms." It is the method by which Philip converted the minister of the Queen of Ethiopia, when he began at the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and preached to him Jesus. And it

is the method which is continually recurring in the discourses and writings of the apostles.

A person who had no previous information upon the subject, would be obliged, in following this method, to mark, as he read through the Scriptures of the Old Testament, those passages which to him appeared to point to an extraordinary person; and then he would either apply every one singly, or all of them collectively to Jesus, in order to judge how far they were fulfilled in him. But we are provided with much assistance in this examination. We are directed, in our search of the Old Testament, by the passages which our Lord and his apostles have quoted, by the knowledge which men versant in Jewish learning have diffused of the predictions marked in the Jewish Targums, and by the labours of the ancient apologists for Christianity, and of many divines since the Reformation, and more especially since the beginning of the last century, who, with very sound critical talents, and much historical information, have devoted themselves to the elucidation of this subject. There is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of these helps. They abridge the labour of investigation; but they do not necessarily bias our judgments. We may examine a prophecy which is pointed out to us, as strictly as if we ourselves had discovered it to be a prophecy. We may even indulge a certain degree of jealousy with regard to all the prophecies which are suggested by the friends of Christianity, and may fortify our minds with the resolution that nothing but the most marked and striking correspondence shall overcome this jealousy. It is right for you to employ every fair precaution against being deceived; and then take into your hands any of those books which serve as an index to the predictions in the Old Testament respecting the Messiah. You have an excellent index in Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, which is, upon the whole, one of the best elementary books for a student in divinity, and which is rendered peculiarly useful with regard to the prophecies, by a part of Dr. Clarke's character that appears in all his theological writings—an intimate profound knowledge of Scripture, and a faculty of bringing together, and arranging in the most lucid order, all the texts which relate to a subject. You have another index

in Bishop Chandler's Defence of Christianity. Sherlock, Newton, Jortin, Hurd, Halifax, Bagot, Macknight, and other divines, have both given a full explication of some particular predictions, and directed to the solution of many others. The comparison of the predictions in the Old Testament respecting the Messiah, with the facts recorded in the New, is one of the most essential parts of the education of a student in divinity. Other Christians may not have leisure for such an employment. But it is expected from your profession, that you know the occasions upon which the predictions were given, and that you are able to defend the received interpretations of them, and to state the order in which they succeeded one another, and the manner in which they were fulfilled. And if you either bring to this inquiry critical sagacity, and historical information of your own, or avail yourselves judiciously of the labours of others, you will attain an enlightened and firm conviction that Jesus is not only a messenger from heaven, but the Messiah of the Jews.

It is impossible for me to lead you through all the particulars of this investigation. But I shall mention, in a few words, the result to which men of the soundest judgment have been conducted, and which they have rendered it easy for us to teach; and then I shall give you a specimen of the exact fulfilment of Jewish prophecy in Jesus.

Moses, by whom the most ancient predictions were compiled, lived a thousand years before Malachi; and Malachi lived after the Jews had returned from their captivity, above four hundred years before the birth of our Saviour. During the long period that intervened between the earliest and the latest prophets, there are scattered through the books of the Old Testament predictions of a dispensation of Providence, to be executed in a future time by an extraordinary personage. And all these predictions are found to apply to the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the predictions, which point through such a length of time to one dispensation, differ widely from one another in clearness and imagery, not one of them is inconsistent with the facts recorded in the Gospel. By the help of that interpretation which the event gives to the prophecy, we can see an uniformity and continuity in the scheme. The more general expressions of the ancient

prophets, and the more minute descriptions of the later, illustrate one another. Every prediction appears to stand in its proper place, and every clause assumes importance and significancy.

There are two circumstances which every false prophet is careful to avoid, or at least to express in ambiguous terms, but which were precisely marked, and literally accomplished with regard to the Messiah. The circumstances are, time and place. It was foretold in a succession of limiting prophecies, that that seed of the woman, which was to bruise the head of the serpent, should arise out of the family of Abraham, out of the children of Israel, out of the tribe of Judah, out of the house of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was born. It is said in the book of Chronicles, "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler."* And to satisfy us that this prophecy was not exhausted by the rulers that had formerly come of Judah, we read in Micah, who lived in the reign of King Hezekiah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."† Here is the place, an obscure village in Judea, so fixed by prophecy, seven hundred years before the event, that the ancient Jews expected the Messiah was to be born there; and some of the modern Jews have said that he was born before Bethlehem was desolated, and lies hidden in the ruins. The time is also fixed. Daniel numbered seventy weeks, that is according to the prophetic style, in which a day stands for a year, four hundred and ninety years, as the interval between the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem, and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.‡ This interpretation of the weeks of Daniel, which learned men have, I think, incontrovertibly established, is confirmed by other predictions still more clear, which declare that the extraordinary personage was to arise out of Judea, while it remained a distinct tribe, possessing some authority, and while its temple stood; and that he was to arise during the fourth kingdom, after the Romans became masters of

* 1 Chron. v. 2. † Micah v. 2. ‡ Daniel ix. 24, 25.

the world. The four successive kingdoms are described in the interpretation of the vision in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and so described, that any person versant in history cannot mistake the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. The Romans had successively conquered the three other branches of the Macedonian empire. But Egypt still existed as an independent kingdom, till the unfortunate Cleopatra ended her days at the battle of Actium, thirty years before the birth of our Saviour; the next year Egypt was made tributary to Rome; and then, first, says the historian Dion Cassius, did Cæsar alone possess all power. The city and temple of Jerusalem were destroyed, and the constitution of the Jewish state annihilated about seventy years after the birth of our Saviour. Thus the establishment of the universal empire of Rome, and the desolation of Jerusalem, are two limits marked by ancient prophecy. The Messiah was to be born after the first, and before the last. They contain between them a space of about a hundred years, within which space the Messiah was to be born; but at such a distance from the last of the two limits, as to allow time for his preaching to the Jews, for his being rejected by them, and for their suffering upon account of that rejection; all which events were also foretold. Within the space of a hundred years the different divisions of Daniel's seventy weeks had their end; and within this space Jesus was born. According to every method, then, in which the time of the Messiah's birth can be computed from ancient predictions, it was fulfilled in Jesus; and this fulfilment of the time brought about, by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances, a fulfilment with regard to the place also of the Messiah's birth. After the Romans, in the progress of their conquests, had subdued Syria, and the other parts of the Macedonian empire adjoining to Judea, that state, standing alone, could not long remain independent. Its form of government was for some time preserved by the indulgence of the Romans. But, about forty years before the birth of our Saviour, an act of the senate set aside the succession of the Asmonæan princes, and conferred the crown of Judea upon Herod the Great. Although Herod was king of Judea, he held his kingdom as a prince dependent upon Rome; and, in token of his vassalage, an order was

issued by Augustus, before his death, that there should be a general enrolment of the inhabitants of Palestine; that is, the Roman census, by which the state acquired a knowledge of the numbers, the wealth, and the condition of its subjects, was extended to this appendage of the Roman empire. In conformity to the Jewish method of classing the people by tribes and families, every inhabitant of Palestine was ordered to have his name enrolled, not in the city where he happened to reside, but in that to which the founder of his house had belonged, and which, in the language of the Jews, was the city of his people. By this order, which was totally independent of the will of Joseph and Mary, and which involved in it a decree of the Roman emperor then for the first time issued concerning Judea, and a resolution of the king of Judea to adopt a particular mode of executing that decree, Joseph and Mary are brought from a distant corner of Palestine to Bethlehem. They are brought at a time when Mary would not have chosen such a journey; and Jesus, to their great inconvenience and distress, is born in a stable, and laid in a manger. It is not easy for any person, who attends to these circumstances, to refrain from acknowledging the hand of Providence connecting the time and the place of the birth of Jesus, so as that, without the possibility of human preparation, they should together fulfil the words of ancient prophets.

I have selected these two necessary accompaniments of every action, because it was possible, within a short compass, to give you a striking view of the coincidence between the prediction and the event. But the same coincidence extends through a multitude of circumstances, which in the prophecies appear minute, unrelated and sometimes contradictory, and which cannot be applied to any one person who ever lived upon earth, except to Jesus of Nazareth, in whom they are united with perfect harmony, so that every one has a meaning, and all together form a consistent whole.

It would seem, then, that we are fully warranted in saying that the circumstances in the appearance of Jesus correspond to the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah of the Jews, and that the presumptive proof and the direct proof of his being a messenger of hea-

ven, are entitled to all the support which they can derive from the justness of his claim to the character of Messiah.

SECTION III.

But the adversaries of Christianity do not allow us so readily to draw this conclusion: And there are objections to the argument from prophecy, the proper answer to which well deserves your study. These objections were brought forward, and stated with much art and plausibility, in a book entitled, Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, written after the beginning of the last century, by Mr. Collins. Bishop Chandler's Defence of Christianity, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, was an answer to this book: and Mr. Collins published a reply, entitled, The scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered. Bishop Sherlock in his discourses on Prophecy, Warburton in his Divine Legation of Moses, and many modern divines, have combated with sound learning and argument the positions of Mr. Collins; so that any student who applies to this important subject, may receive very able assistance in forming his judgment.

I shall state to you the objections, with the answers. The position of Mr. Collins' book is this: Christianity is founded on Judaism. Our Lord and his apostles prove Christianity from the Old Testament. If the proofs which they draw from thence are valid, Christianity is true: if they are not valid, Christianity is false. But all the prophecies of the Old Testament are applicable to Christ only in a secondary, typical, allegorical sense. Such a sense, being fanatical and chimerical, cannot be admitted according to the scholastic rules of interpretation. And thus Christianity, deriving no real support from Judaism upon which it is professedly grounded, must be false.

To this artful mis-statement of the subject, we have two answers.

The first is, that there are in the Old Testament direct prophecies of the Messiah, which, not in a secondary, but in their primary sense, apply to Jesus of Nazareth. There

is in the Pentateuch a promise of a prophet to be raised up from amongst the Jews like unto Moses.* But none in all the succession of Jewish prophets was like him in the free intercourse which he had with the Almighty, the importance of the commission which he bore, and the signs which he did. And, therefore, that succession not only kept alive the expectation, but was itself a pledge of the great prophet that should come. The writings of the succession of prophets are full of predictions concerning a new dispensation more glorious, more general, more spiritual than the Jewish economy, when "the sons of the stranger should join themselves to the Lord;" when "his house should be an house of prayer for all people;" when "the gods of the earth should be famished," no more offerings being presented to them, and "every one from his place," not at Jerusalem, but in his ordinary residence, "should worship Jehovah." "Behold the days come, saith the Lord," by Jeremiah, who lived in the time of the captivity, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."† It is further to be remarked, that the prophecy of this new spiritual dispensation is connected throughout the Old Testament with the mention of a person by whom the dispensation was to be introduced. If it is called a covenant, we read of the Messenger of the covenant. If it is called a kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, which should never be destroyed, we read of a chief ruler to come out of Judah, of the Prince of Peace who was to sit on the throne of his father David, to establish it with justice and judgment for ever; of one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, to whom is given an universal and everlasting dominion. If the new dispensation is represented as a more perfect mode of instruction, we read of a prophet upon whom should

* Deut. xviii. 15, 18. † Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

rest the spirit of wisdom and understanding. If it is styled the deliverance of captives, there is also a redeemer; or victory, there is also a leader; or a sacrifice, there is also an everlasting priest. The intimations of this extraordinary personage, so closely connected with the new dispensation, became more clear and pointed as the time of his coming approached: and there are predictions in Malachi and the later prophets, which in their direct primary sense can belong to no other but the Messiah. "Behold," says God by Malachi, "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in." And again, "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord."* Even Grotius, whose principle it was, in his exposition of the Old Testament, to seek for the primary sense of the prophecies in the Jewish affairs which were immediately under the eye of the prophet, and to consider their application to Jesus as a secondary sense, and who has often been misled by this principle into very forced interpretations, has not been able to assign any other meaning to these prophecies, with which the Old Testament concludes, and with a repetition of which Mark begins his Gospel, than that Malachi, with whom the prophetical spirit ceased, gave notice that it should be resumed in John the forerunner of the Messiah, who in the spirit and the power of Elias, should prepare the way before the messenger of the covenant.

The first answer then to Mr. Collins is, that there are in the Old Testament direct prophecies of the dispensation of the Gospel, and of the Messiah.

The second answer is, that prophecies applicable to Jesus only in a typical and secondary sense are not fanatical or unscholastic.

We are taught by the Apostle Paul to consider all the ceremonies of the law as types of the more perfect and spiritual dispensation of the Gospel. The meats, the drinks, the washings, the institution of the Levitical priesthood, the paschal lamb, and the other sacrifices, were figures for the time then present, shadows of good things

* Malachi iii. 1, 4, 5.

to come, a rough draught, as the word type properly imports, of the blessings of that better covenant which the law announced. Many actions and incidents in the lives of eminent persons under the law are held forth as types of the Christ; and by the application which is made in the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, of various passages in the Old Testament, we are led to consider many prophecies, which originally had, both in the intention of the speaker and in the sense of the hearers, a reference only to Jewish affairs, and were then interpreted by that reference, as receiving their full accomplishment in the events of the Gospel. This is what we mean by the double sense of prophecy. The seventy-second psalm is an example. It is the paternal blessing given by David in his dying moments to Solomon, when with the complacency of an affectionate father and a good prince, he looks forward to that happiness which his people were to enjoy under the peaceful reign of his son. But while he contemplates this great and pleasing object, he is led by the Spirit to look beyond it, to that illustrious descendant whose birth he had been taught to expect,—that branch which in the latter days was to spring out of the root of Jesse. The two objects blend themselves together in his imagination; at least the words in which he pours forth his conceptions, although suggested by the promise concerning Solomon, are much too exalted when applied to the occurrences even of his distinguished reign, and were fulfilled only in the nature and the extent of the blessings conveyed by the Gospel. Had we no warrant from authority upon other accounts respectable, to bring this secondary sense out of some prophecies; or had we no prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament of another kind, it would be unfair and unscholastical reasoning to infer that Jesus is the Messiah, because some passages may be thus transferred to him. We rest the argument from prophecy upon those predictions which expressly point to the Messiah, and upon that authority which the miracles of Jesus and his apostles gave to them as interpreters of prophecy: and we say that when their interpretation of those prophecies, which were originally applicable to other events, gives to every expression in them a natural and complete sense, and at the same time coincides

with the spirit of those predictions concerning the Gospel which are direct, we have the best reason for receiving this further meaning, not to the exclusion of the other, but as the full exposition of the words of the prophet.

There is nothing in the nature of prophecy, or the general use of language, inconsistent with this account of the matter. If you allow that prophecy is a thing possible, you must admit that "it came not by the will of man, but that holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Prophecy by its nature is distinguished from other kinds of discourse. At other times, men utter sentiments which they feel; they relate facts which they know; they reason according to the measure of their faculties. But when they prophesy, that is, when they declare, by the inspiration of God, events which are out of the reach of human foresight, they speak not of themselves; they are but the vehicles for conveying the mind of another Being; they pronounce the words which he puts into their mouth; and whether these words be intelligible or not, or what their full meaning may be, depends not upon them, but upon him from whom the words proceed. It is thus clearly deducible from the nature of prophecy, that there might be in the predictions of the Old Testament, a further meaning than that which was distinctly presented to the minds of those who spake. And we may conceive, that as the high priest Caiaphas was directed in the Jewish council to employ words which, although in his eyes they contained only a political advice, were really a prophecy of the benefits resulting from the death of Christ,* so the Spirit of God might introduce into predictions, which to those who uttered them seemed to respect only the present fortune of their country, or the fate of some illustrious personage, expressions, in a certain sense indeed, applicable to them, but pointing to a more important event, and a more glorious personage, in whom it was to appear at a future period that they were literally fulfilled.

As there is nothing in the nature of prophecy inconsistent with that account of types and secondary senses which constitutes our second answer to the objection of

* John xi. 49.

Mr. Collins, so this account is supported by the general use of language. And any person versant in that use, will not be disposed to call the application of types and secondary prophecies unscholastic. The typical nature of the Jewish ritual accords with that most ancient method of conversing by actions, that kind of symbolical language, which is adopted in early times from the scantiness of words, which is retained in advanced periods of society, in order to give energy and beauty to speech, which abounds in the writings of the Jewish prophets, and appears to have been in familiar and universal use through all the regions adjoining to Judea. In like manner, prophecies which admit of two senses, one immediate and obvious, the other remote and hidden, are agreeable to that allegory which is only the symbolical language appearing in an extended discourse. Both sacred and profane poets afford beautiful examples of allegory. In the 14th Ode of the first book of Horace, the poet, under a concern for the safety of his friends at sea in a shattered bark, contrives at the same time to convey his apprehensions concerning the issue of the new civil war. There is a finished allegory in the 80th Psalm. And Dr. Warburton has pointed out a prophecy in the two first chapters of Joel, where the prophet, he says, in his prediction of an approaching ravage by locusts, foretells likewise, in the same words, a succeeding desolation by the Assyrian army. For, as some of the expressions mark death by insects, and others desolation by war, both senses must be admitted. Allegory abounds in all the moral writings of antiquity, and is employed at some times as an agreeable method of communicating knowledge, and at other times as a cover for that which was too refined for vulgar eyes. There is not any particular reason for saying that it was unworthy of God to accommodate the style of many of his prophecies to this universal use of allegory; because, whenever the Almighty condescends to speak to us, whether he uses plain or figurative language, he must speak after the manner of men; and we are able to assign a most important purpose, which was attained by those prophecies of a double sense, the interpretation of which, although very far from deserving the name of unscholastic, may be called allegorical. It pleased God, in the intermediate space between

the first predictions of the Messiah and the fulfilment of them, to establish the Jewish economy, an institution singular in its nature, and limited in its extent. This intermediate institution being for many ages a theocracy, there arose a succession of prophets by whom the intercourse between the Almighty Sovereign and his people was maintained; and the whole administration of the affairs of the Jews was long conducted by the prophets. It was natural for this succession of prophecy to give some notice of the better covenant which was to be made; and accordingly we can trace predictions of the Messiah from the books of Moses, till the cessation of the prophetical spirit of Malachi. The Holy Ghost, by whom the prophet spoke, could have rendered these notices of the spiritual and universal nature of the future dispensation clear and intelligible to every one who heard them. But, in this case, the intermediate preparatory dispensation would have been despised. The Jews comparing their burdensome ritual with the simplicity of Gospel worship,—their imperfect sacrifices with the efficacy of the great atonement,—their temporal rewards with the crown of glory laid up in heaven, would have thrown off the yoke which they were called to bear; and those rudiments by which the law was given to train their minds for the perfect instruction of the Gospel, would have been cast away as "beggarly elements." If the law served any purpose, it was necessary that it should be respected and observed so long as it was to subsist; and therefore it would have been inconsistent with the wisdom of Him from whom it proceeded, that it should impart such a degree of light as might have destroyed itself. Enough was to be declared to raise and cherish an expectation of that which was to come, but not enough to disparage the things that then were. This end is most perfectly attained by the types, and the prophecies of a double sense which are contained in the Old Testament. Both were so agreeable to the manners of the times, and both received such a degree of explication from the direct prophecies concerning the Messiah, that there was an universal apprehension of their further meaning. Yet their immediate importance preserved the respect which was due to the law; and when, in the end of the age of prophecy, predictions of the Messiah were given by different

prophets which could not apply to any other person,—these direct predictions were clothed in a figurative language, all the figures of which were borrowed from the law. The law, in this way, was still magnified; and as the child is kept under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the father, so says the apostle to the Galatians, the Jews were kept under the law, the guardians of the oracles of God,—the depositaries of the hopes of mankind, until the time came that the faith should be revealed.* When it was revealed, then the allegory received its interpretation; the significancy of the types, the reddition of the parables, the hidden meaning of the ancient prophecies, and the propriety of the figures in which the latter were clothed, all now stand forth to the admiration and conviction of the Christian world. What was a hyperbole, in its application to Jewish affairs, becomes, says Dr. Warburton, plain speech, or an obvious metaphor, when transferred to the Gospel; and the Old Testament appears to have been, what St. Austin calls it, a continued prophecy of the New.

SECTION IV.

Before I proceed to state the amount of the argument from prophecy, there is one other objection to that argument which requires to be mentioned. The objection arises from a kind of verbal criticism, but does not deserve upon that account to be dismissed as unimportant.

It was long ago observed, that many of the passages, quoted from the Old Testament in the New, do not exactly agree with the text of our copies of the Old Testament. The apology commonly made for this difference was, that our Lord and his apostles did not quote from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint translation, which was known and respected in Judea. But, upon accurate investigation, it was found that the quotations do not always correspond with the Septuagint; and that there are many which agree

* Gal. iv.

neither with the Septuagint nor with the Hebrew. It was insinuated, therefore, by the adversaries of Christianity, that our Lord and his apostles had not been scrupulous in their method of quoting the Old Testament; but wishing to ground Christianity upon Judaism, and finding it difficult to lay this foundation with the materials that existed, had accommodated the words of the Old Testament to their argument, and made the prophets say what it was necessary for the conclusiveness of that argument they should seem to say. It appears at first sight very unlikely that our Lord and his apostles, who began the preaching of the Gospel from Judea, would, in the hearing of the Jews, use such liberty with the Scriptures which were publicly read in those very synagogues where they were thus misquoted. The detection of the fraud was easy, or rather unavoidable, and must have been ruinous to the cause of Christianity. But however improbable it may seem that our Lord and his apostles should be guilty of such a fraud, the fact is undeniable, that the quotations in the New Testament do not always agree with the books from which they are taken; and it remains with the friends of Christianity to account for this fact. Many zealous Christians have thought it essential to the honour of that revelation granted to the Jews, to maintain the integrity of the original Hebrew text; and even during the course of the last century, some men versant in Jewish learning argued most strenuously, that the Providence of God employed the vigilance of the Jewish nation, and certain precautions of the Jewish Rabbis, to preserve the Hebrew text, through all ages from every degree of adulteration. Were this opinion sound, it does not appear to me that any satisfying account could be given of the difference between the Old Testament and the New, in those passages where the latter professes to quote the former. But as suspicions had been long entertained that there were variations in the Hebrew text, so the opinion of those who maintain its integrity was in the last century completely refuted by the labours of Dr. Kennicott, who, from a collation of six hundred manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, has demonstrated that there have been numberless small alterations, and some of considerable importance. We found formerly that the various readings of the Greek text of the New Testament arose

from the ignorance or carelessness of transcribers, and that their being permitted could easily be reconciled with the wisdom of God, and the divine original of Christianity. We need not be surprised to find the same causes producing similar effects with regard to the Hebrew text. It has been said, that particular circumstances may naturally lead us to look for a greater number of such varieties in the Hebrew text than in the Greek; and there is much reason to suspect that both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint translation were wilfully corrupted by the Jews after the days of our Saviour, in order to elude the argument which the Christians deduced from the clear application of Jewish prophecies to him. We know that, in the second century, another Greek translation of the Old Testament, by Aquila, more inaccurate, and designedly throwing a veil over many prophecies of the Messiah, was substituted by the Jews in place of the Septuagint. Taking then the learned men who have devoted themselves to this study as our guides, and resting in the conclusions which they have established by a laborious induction of particulars, we say, that the copies both of the Hebrew text and of the Septuagint, which were in use in the days of our Saviour, were more correct than those which we now have; that by the help of many manuscripts, and of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which was much less corrupted than the books of Moses in Hebrew, the true reading of the Hebrew has been discovered in many places where it had been vitiated; and that the honour of our Lord and his apostles has been fully vindicated; for it appears that they quoted from the Septuagint when the sense of the author was there clearly expressed; that, at other times, they translated the original for themselves, or used some translation more perfect than the Septuagint, and that there are many places in which their quotations, although different from the Hebrew that is now read, agree exactly with the Hebrew text, as by sound criticism it may be restored.

Such is the important service which sound criticism has rendered to religion. The unbeliever triumphed for a season in an objection which was plausible, because the answer to it was misapprehended or unknown. But the progress of investigation has unfolded the truth, and has placed, in the most conspicuous light, the fidelity and accu-

racy of the quotations made by those who grounded Christianity upon Judaism.

SECTION V.

HAVING thus cleared the way, by settling every preliminary point, and removing the objections which appear to me the strongest, I come to state concisely the argument from prophecy, or the nature of that support which the truth of Christianity derives from the coincidence between the appearance of Jesus, and the predictions of the Old Testament.

In stating this argument, we allow that there are passages quoted by our Lord and his apostles from the Old Testament, in which there is merely an accommodation of words, that had been spoken in one sense, to another sense, in which they are equally true. When it is said, in the second chapter of Matthew, "Joseph took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son," nothing more is meant by the expression, "that it might be fulfilled," and the idiom of ancient languages does not require any thing more to be understood, than that the words which in Hosea are applied to Israel, whom God calls his Son, received another meaning when he, who is truly the Son of God, was brought out of the same place from which Israel came. We allow that it does not follow, from the possibility of this accommodation, that Hosea meant to foretell the future transference of his words, any more than that he who first enunciated a proverbial saying, foresaw all the particular occasions upon which it might be fitly applied. We admit, further, that the secondary sense of those prophecies in which we say the Messiah was included, and the typical nature of those ceremonies or actions which prefigured him, are not always obvious upon the consideration of particular prophecies or types. Nay, we admit that there is a degree of obscurity or doubt with re-

gard to some of those prophecies in which the Messiah is directly foretold; and, therefore, the argument does not depend upon the clearness of any single prophecy, or upon the interpretation which may be given to this or that passage, but it arises from a connected view of the direct predictions, the secondary prophecies, and the types, as supporting and illustrating one another. Allow as much as any rational inquirer can allow to the shrewdness of conjecture, to accidental coincidence, and to human preparation, still the induction of particulars that cannot be accounted for by any of these means, is so complete and so striking, as to constitute a plain incontrovertible argument.

From the exact fulfilment of predictions extending through many centuries, uttered by different prophets, with different imagery, yet pointing to one train of events, and marking a variety of circumstances, in their nature the most contingent; from the aptness of all the parts of the intermediate dispensation to shadow forth the blessings and the character of that ultimate dispensation which it announced, and from the sublime literal exposition which the events of the ultimate dispensation give to all those prophecies under the preparatory dispensation, which are expressed in language too exalted for the objects to which they were then applied; from these things laid together, there arises, to any person who considers them with due care, the most satisfying conviction that the whole scheme of Christianity was foreseen and foretold under the Old Testament. If you admit this position, there are two consequences which you will admit as flowing from it. The first is, that the prophets under the Old Testament were divinely inspired. The very means, by which you attain a conviction that they prophesied of the gospel, render it manifest that the things foretold were beyond the reach of human sagacity; and there is thus presented to us in the fulfilment of their predictions, an evidence of the truth of the Mosaic dispensation as clear as that arising from the miracles performed by Moses before the children of Israel. The second consequence, and that which we are more immediately concerned in drawing, is this, that the scheme in which the predictions of these prophets were fulfilled is a divine revelation. In order to perceive how this consequence flows from the position which we have

been establishing, you will attend to the two uses of prophecy, its immediate use in the ages in which it was given, and that further use which extends to the latest ages of the world. It is certain that prophecy ministered to the comfort, the instruction, and the hope of those who lived in the days of the prophets; and we know, that the predictions respecting the Messiah were so far understood, as to excite in the whole nation of the Jews an expectation of the Messiah, and to cherish in just and devout men that state of mind, which is beautifully styled by Luke in the second chapter of his gospel, "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and "looking for redemption in Jerusalem." But that this was not the whole intention of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, appears indisputably from hence, that, according to the account which has been given of these prophecies, they contain a further provision than was necessary for that end. There were many parts of them which were not understood at that time, but were left to be unfolded to the age which was to behold their fulfilment. As such parts were useless to the age which received the prophecy, we must believe that, if they had any use, they were designed for that future age, and that the prophets, as the apostle Peter speaks, "ministered not unto themselves, but unto us, the things which are now reported by them that have preached the gospel."*

Bishop Sherlock wrote his admirable discourses on the use and intent of prophecy in the several ages of the world, to show that prophecy was intended chiefly for the support of faith and religion in the old world, as faith and religion could not have existed in any age after the fall without this extraordinary support; and he has been led, by an attachment to his own system, to express himself in some places of his book to the disparagement of the further use of prophecy. Yet even Bishop Sherlock admits that prophecy may be of great advantage to future ages, and says that it was not unworthy of the wisdom of God to enclose, from the days of old in the words of prophecy, a secret evidence which he intended the world should one day see. The Bishop has stated in these few words, with his wonted energy and facility of expression, that further

* 1 Peter i. 12.

use of prophecy of which I am speaking. It is merely a dispute about words, whether the laying up this secret evidence was the primary or the secondary intention of the Giver of prophecy. But it is plain, that when all the notices of the first coming of Christ, that were communicated to different nations, are brought together into our view, and explained by the event, they illustrate, in the most striking manner, both the truth and the importance of Christianity. The gospel appears to be not a solitary unrelated part of the divine economy, but the purpose which God purposed from the beginning; and Jesus comes according to the declared counsel of heaven to do the will of his Father. The miracles which he wrought derive a peculiar confirmation, from being the very works which ancient prophets had foretold as characteristical of the Messiah. Prophecy and miracle, in this way, lend their aid to one another, and give the most complete assurance which can be desired that there is no deception; for as miracles could not have justified the claim of Jesus to the character of Messiah, unless ancient predictions had been fulfilled in him, so the miracles which he wrought were an essential part of that fulfilment; and hence arises the peculiar significancy and force of that answer which he made to the disciples of John, when they asked him, "Art thou he that should come?" "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." He refers to his miracles; but he mentions them in the very words of Isaiah, thus conjoining with that divine wisdom which shines in all his discourses, the two great arguments by which his disciples in all succeeding ages were to defend their faith. The internal evidence, too, arising from the nature of his undertaking, is very much heightened, when we see that that undertaking was the completion of the plan of Providence. We are often able to vindicate and explain the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, by referring to the manner in which they were sketched out by the preparatory dispensation; and the intimate connexion of the two systems, which enables us to give a satisfactory account of the peculiarities of the law, reflects much dig-

nity upon the gospel. While the kingdoms of this world are spoken of only in so far as the kingdom of the Messiah was to be affected by their fate, we see the servants of the Almighty preparing the way for the Prince of Peace; the continued effusion of the divine Spirit does honour to Jesus; the prophets arise in long succession to bear witness to him; and our respect for the sundry intimations of the will of heaven is concentred in reverence for that scheme towards which all of them tend. In the magnificence of that provision which ushered in the Gospel, we recognise the majesty of God; in the continuity and nice adjustment of its parts, we trace his wisdom; and its increasing light is analogous to that gradual preparation, by which all the works of God advance to maturity.

Such is the support which the truth of Christianity derives from the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah. The argument from prophecy, therefore, was not, as Mr. Gibbon sarcastically and incorrectly says, merely addressed to the Jews as an *argumentum ad hominem*. To those to whom the books of the Old Testament are known chiefly if not entirely by the references made to them in the gospel, it affords much confirmation to their faith, and much enlargement of their views with regard to Christianity.

Prideaux—*Hartley*—*Gray*—*Prettyman's Institutes*—*Stillingfleet's Orig. Sacræ*—*Chandler*—*Hurd*—*Warburton*—*Newton*—*Law*——*Sykes*—*Kennicot*—*Randolph's Collation*—*Geddes's Prospectus*—*Lowth de Sacrâ Poesi*—*Horne's Preface to Commentary on the Psalms.*

CHAP. VII.

PREDICTIONS DELIVERED BY JESUS.

THE support of which we have hitherto spoken proceeds upon those prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, which were fulfilled by his appearing in the flesh. But a due attention to the subject leads us much further, and we soon perceive that the birth of Christ, important and glorious as that event was, far from exhausting the significations given by the ancient prophets, only served to introduce other events most interesting to the human race, which were also foretold, which reach to the end of time, and which, as they arise in the order of Providence, are fitted to afford an increasing evidence of the truth of Christianity.

In entering upon this wide field of argument, which here opens to our view, I think it of importance to direct your attention to the admirable economy with which the prophecies of the Old Testament are disposed. They may be divided into two great classes, as they respect either the temporal condition of the Jews and their neighbours, or that future spiritual dispensation which was to arise in the latter days.

As the whole administration of the affairs of the Jews was for many ages conducted by prophecy, there are, in the Old Testament, numberless predictions concerning the temporal condition of themselves and their neighbours. Some of these predictions were to be fulfilled in a short time, so that the same person who heard the prophecy saw the event. This near fulfilment of some predictions procured credit for others respecting more distant events. "Behold," said the Almighty to the nation of the Jews,

" the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare. Before they spring up, I tell you of them."* There are prophecies of the temporal condition of nations, which are at this day fulfilling in the world. The present state of Babylon, of Tyre, of Egypt, of the descendants of Ishmael, and of the Jewish people themselves, has been shown by learned men, and particularly by Bishop Newton, to correspond exactly to the words of ancient prophets; and thus, as the experience of the Jewish nation taught them to expect every event which their prophets announced, so the visible continued accomplishment of what these prophets spoke, two or three thousand years ago, is to us a standing demonstration that they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But this whole system of prophecy was merely a vehicle for preserving and conveying to the world the hopes of a future spiritual dispensation. It embraced indeed the temporal affairs of the Jews, and of the nations with whom they were particularly connected, because an intermediate preparatory dispensation was established till the better hope should be brought in. But all the prophecies of temporal good and evil were subservient to the promise of the Messiah, and the fulfilment of those prophecies cherished among the nation of the Jews the expectation of that future covenant which was the end of the law. The birth of the Messiah justified this expectation. It did not indeed acomplish all the words of the prophets, but it brought assurance that there should be, in due time, a complete accomplishment. Several great events happened soon after the birth of the Messiah, according to the ancient Scriptures. Other instances of fulfilment are at this day seen in the religious state of the world, and there are parts of the prophecy yet to be fulfilled. We are thus placed in the middle of a great scheme, of which we have seen the beginning and the progress. The conclusion remains to be unfolded. But the correspondence to the words of the prophets both in the events which are past, and in the present state of things, may establish our hope that the mystery of God will be finished; and the succession of events, as they open in the course of Providence

* Isaiah xlii. 9.

upon the generations of men, gradually explains those parts of the prophecy which were not understood.

The prophecies of the temporal state of Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, and other nations which are now fulfilling in the world, are so clear, that any one versant in history may compare the event with the prediction—and I do not know a more pleasing, satisfactory book for this purpose than Newton on the Prophecies. But the prophecies of those events in the spiritual state of the world, which were to happen after the birth of the Messiah, are in general short and obscure; and although any person who is capable of considering the scheme of ancient prophecy, may be satisfied of its looking forward to the end of all things, yet without some assistance it would be impossible for him to form a distinct conception of what was to follow the birth of the Messiah, and difficult even to refer events, as they arise, to their place in the prediction. This kind of obscurity was allowed by God to remain upon the ancient predictions respecting the future fortunes of the Messiah's kingdom, because a remedy was to arise in due time by the advent of that great Prophet who, having fulfilled in his appearance one part of those predictions, became the interpreter of that which remains. The miracles by which he showed that he was a messenger of heaven, and the exact coincidence between the history of his life, and the characters of the Jewish Messiah, were sufficient to procure credit for his interpretation. He was worthy to take the book which Daniel had said was sealed till the time of the end, to open the seals of it, and to explain to the nations of the earth the words which were shut up therein. Thus Jesus stands forth not only as the personage whom ancient prophets had foretold, but as himself a Prophet. The same Spirit which had moved them, but whose significations of future events had ceased with Malachi, speaks by that messenger of the covenant whom Malachi had announced, and upon whom Isaiah had said the Spirit of the Lord should rest: and there is opened, in the discourses of Jesus and the writings of his apostles, a series of predictions explicatory of the dark parts of ancient prophecy, and extending to the consummation of all things.

It is not possible to conceive a more perfect unity of design than that which we have now traced in the system

of prophecy; and every human scheme fades and dwindles when compared with the magnificence and extent of this plan—Jesus Christ the corner-stone which connects the old and the new dispensation; in whom one part of the ancient predictions received its accomplishment, and from whom the other received its interpretation. The spirit of prophecy thus ministers in two distinct methods to the evidence of Christianity. It enclosed in the words and actions of the Old Testament a proof that Jesus was that person whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world; and it holds forth, in the words uttered by Jesus and his apostles, that mark of a divine mission, which all impostors have assumed, and which mankind have often ascribed to those who did not possess it, but which, where it really exists, may be easily distinguished from all false pretensions, and is one of the evidences which the Almighty hath taught us to look for in every messenger of his. He claims it as his prerogative to declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that shall be; he challenges the gods of the nations to give this proof of their divinity; "Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King Jacob. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."* And he hath given this mark of his messengers: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him."†

As Jesus assumed this universal character of a divine messenger, so he was distinguished from other prophets by the clearness, the extent, and the importance of his predictions. And he showed that the Spirit was given to him without measure, by exercising the gift of prophecy upon subjects very different from one another, both in their nature, and in their times. He foretold events which seem to be regulated by the caprice of men, and those which depend purely upon the will of God. He foretold some events so near, that we find in Scripture both the prophecy and the fulfilment; others which took place a few years after the canon of Scripture was closed, with regard to which we learn the complete fulfilment of the pro-

* Isaiah xli. 21, 23; xlvi. 9, 10. † Jer. xxviii. 9.

phecy from contemporary historians; others which are carrying forward in the world, with regard to which the fulfilment of the prophecy is a matter of daily observation; and others which reach to distant periods, and to the consummation of all things, which are still the objects of a Christian's hope, but with regard to which, hope rises to perfect assurance by the recollection of what is past.

This is a general view of the prophecies of Jesus and his apostles; and I recommend them to your particular attention and study, because, in my opinion, the evidence of Christianity derives two great advantages from the study of them. The *first* advantage arises from their appearing to be the explication and enlargement of the short obscure predictions contained in the Old Testament with regard to the same events; such an explication as no other person was qualified to give, and therefore as clear a demonstration of the prophetical spirit of Jesus as if he had uttered a series of predictions perfectly new, yet such an explication as illustrates the intimate connexion of the two dispensations. The prophecies of Jesus and his apostles, while they introduce many particulars that are not found in the writings of the ancient prophets, are always consistent with the words spoken by them, referring to their images, and unfolding their dark sayings. The highest honour is, in this way, reflected upon the extent of the scheme of ancient prophecy; and Jesus, by honouring this scheme, and carrying it forward, confirms his claim to the character of the Jewish Messiah, because he speaks in a manner most becoming that great Prophet, who was to be raised up like unto Moses. The *second* advantage arising from a particular study of the predictions of Jesus is this, that all the events, which constitute the history of his religion, thus appear to be the fulfilment of prophecy. Besides the support which every one of them in its place gives to the truth of Christianity, all together unite as parts of a system which had entered into the mind of the Author of our religion, and when they happen, they afford a demonstration that the God of knowledge had put words into his mouth.

To perceive distinctly the nature and the importance of this secondary advantage, the four Gospels should be read from beginning to end, with a special view to mark the

prophecies of Jesus. In doing this, you will set down the many instances in which he discovers a knowledge of the human heart, of the intentions and thoughts of both his friends and his enemies, as of the same order with the gift of prophecy. You will find predictions of common occurrences, and near events, which must have made a deep impression upon those who lived with him; and, scattered through all his discourses, you will meet with predictions of remote events, for which the fulfilment of the predictions of near events was fitted to procure credit. Out of the many particulars which, upon such a review, may engage your attention, I select the following important objects, as affording a specimen of the variety of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the manner in which those events which constitute the history of his religion, may be considered as the fulfilment of his predictions; the prophecies of his death, of his resurrection, of the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the situation and behaviour of his disciples, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the progress of his religion previous to that period, of the condition of the Jewish nation subsequent to it, and of the final discrimination of the righteous and the wicked.

1. The death of Jesus, that great event which, when considered in the Scripture view of it, is characteristical of the Gospel as the religion of sinners, is the subject of many of our Lord's prophecies. He marks, without hesitation, the time, the place, and the manner of it; the treachery of one disciple, the denial of another, the desertion of the rest, the sentence of condemnation which the supreme council of the Jewish nation, at a time when Jews were gathered from all corners of the land, was to pronounce in Jerusalem upon an innocent man, whom many of the people held to be a prophet, and the execution of that sentence by the Gentiles, to whom the rulers of the Jews, jealous as they were of their own authority, and indignant under the Roman yoke, were to deliver the pannel. But of all the kinds of death which might have been inflicted, the prophecy of Jesus selects one unknown in the land of Judea, and reserved by the Romans for slaves, who, having been distinguished from freemen in their life, were distinguished also in the manner of their death. It is not possible to conceive any events more

contingent than those which this prophecy embraces. Yet it was literally fulfilled. When you examine it attentively, there are several particulars which you will be delighted with marking, because they constitute an indirect support to the truth of Christianity, arising out of the contexture of the prophecy. Thus, you will find that the prophecy applies to Jesus many minute circumstances in the Jewish types of the Messiah, and in this way shows us that as the death of the Messiah had been shadowed forth by the sacrifices of the law, and foretold by Isaiah and Daniel, so the manner of it had, from the beginning, been in the view of the spirit of prophecy, and was signified beforehand in various ways. You will admire the magnanimity of that man who came into the world that he might lay down his life, and who never courted the favour of the people, or shrunk from the discharge of any duty, although all the circumstances of barbarity that marked his death were fully before his eyes. You will admire the dignity, and the regard to the peace of his country, which restrained Jesus from raising the pity and indignation of the multitude by publishing his future sufferings to them, and which led him to address all the clear minute predictions of his death to his disciples in private. You will admire the tenderness and wisdom with which he delayed any such communication even to them, till they had declared a conviction of his being the Messiah, and then gradually unfolded the dismal subject as they were able to bear it; and you will perceive the gracious purpose which was promoted by the growing particularity of his prophecy, as the event drew near. "Now," says he, "I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he."*

2. The circumstances of his death, every one of which had been foretold by himself, thus served to procure credit for that prophecy of his resurrection, which was always conjoined with them. The ancient prophets had declared that the Messiah was to live for ever; and as both Isaiah and Daniel, who spoke of his everlasting kingdom, had spoken also of his being cut off out of the land of the living, their words implied that he was to rise from the dead.

* John xiii. 19.

This implication of a resurrection was brought out by our Lord. Conscious of the divine power which dwelt in him, he said that on the third day he should rise again; and in the hearing of all the people, he held forth Jonas as a type of himself. The people recollected his words as soon as he was put to death, for "the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again:"* and they vainly employed precautions to prevent the fulfilment of his prophecy. The apostles have left a most natural picture of their own weakness and disappointment, by transmitting it upon record to posterity, that the death of Jesus effaced from their minds his promise of rising again, or at least destroyed in the interval their faith of its being fulfilled. But you will find that both the angels who appeared to the women, and our Lord in his discourses with his disciples, recalled the prophecy to their minds: and, by one expression of John, you may judge of the confirmation which their faith was to receive from the recollection of predictions which had been addressed to themselves, and the fulfilment of which they had seen. When the Jews asked a sign of him, he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews understood him to mean the temple in which they were standing. "But he spake," says John, "of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."† There is no fact in the history of the Christian religion more important than the resurrection of Jesus. It is that seal of his commission, without which all the others are of none avail; the assurance to us that the purpose of his death is accomplished, and the pledge of our resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain." As the evidence of the fact therefore will appear to us, when we proceed to examine it, to be most particular and satisfying, so it was most natural that this very important fact should be the subject of prophecy.

3. Our Lord foretold also that he was to ascend into heaven; and the fulfilment of this prophecy was made an object

* Matt. xxvii. 62, 63. † John ii. 18—22.

of sense to the apostles as far as their eyes could reach. But that they might be satisfied there was no illusion, and that the rest of the world might know assuredly that he was gone to the Father, the prophecy of this ascension was connected with the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he said he would send from his Father to comfort the disciples after his departure, to qualify them for preaching his religion, and to ensure the success of their labours. You learn from the Book of Acts the fulfilment of this promise; and, when you examine the subject, the following circumstances will deserve your attention. The miraculous gifts poured forth on the day of Pentecost are stated by the apostle Peter, as "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."* The last days is a prophetical expression for the age of the Messiah, which was to succeed the age of the law. It is plain that the prophecy of Joel had not been fulfilled before the day of Pentecost; for during the greater part of the time that had elapsed between the word of Joel and that day, the prophetical spirit had ceased entirely. His word did receive a visible fulfilment upon that day; and this fulfilment being an event which our Lord had taught his apostles to look for, Peter was entitled to apply the word of Joel to the event which then took place; and our Lord appears in his promise of the Holy Ghost, as in his other prophecies, to be the true interpreter of ancient predictions. Further, the promise of Jesus does not respect merely the inward influences of the Spirit. These, however essential to the comfort and improvement of man, do not admit of being clearly proved to others, either by the testimony of sense, or by the deductions of reason, and cannot always be distinguished by certain marks from the visions of fanatical men. But the promise of Jesus expresses precisely external visible works, to which the power of imagination does not reach, and with regard to which every spectator may attain the same assurance as with regard to any other object of sense. "These signs," said Jesus before his ascension, "shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall

* Acts ii. 16, 17.

speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and, if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* It limits a time, within which the faculty of performing such works was to be conferred; and it chooses the most public place as the scene of their being exhibited. For Jesus, just before he was taken up into heaven, "commanded his apostles that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which," saith he, "ye have heard of me; ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."† Lastly, You will be led by the examination of this subject to observe, that when the works, performed in consequence of the gifts conferred upon the day of Pentecost, became palpable to the senses of men, they were, like the miracles of Jesus, the vouchers of a divine commission. Being performed in his name, and in fulfilment of his promise, they were fitted to convince the world that he had received power from the Father after his ascension, and that he had given this power to his apostles. These men were, in this way, recommended to the world as sent by Jesus to carry forward the great scheme which he had opened. Full credit was procured for all that they taught, because their works were the signs of those internal operations by which they were inspired with the knowledge, wisdom, and fortitude necessary for their undertaking; and their works were also the pledges of the fulfilment of that promise which extends to true Christians in all ages, that the Holy Spirit shall be given to those who ask it, according to the measure of their necessities.

4. The fourth subject of our Lord's prophecies which I mentioned was the situation and behaviour of his apostles after he should leave them. He never amused them with false hopes; he forewarned them all of the scorn, and hatred, and persecution which they were to expect in preaching his religion; and yet, although he had daily experience of their timidity, and slowness of apprehension, although he foretold that at his death they would forsake him, yet he foretold with equal assurance, that after his ascension they should be his witnesses to the ends of the

* Mark xvi. 17, 18. † Acts i. 4. 5.

earth; and he left in the hands of these feeble men, who were to be involved in calamities upon his account, that cause for which he had lived and died, without expressing any apprehension that it would suffer by their weakness. "If ye were of the world," he says in his last discourse to them before his death, "the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them."* There is in all this a dignity of manner, and a consciousness of divine resources, which exalt Jesus above every other person that appears in history. When we see in the propagation of his religion, the fortitude, the wisdom, and the eloquence of his servants, their steadfastness amidst trials sufficient to shake the firmest minds, and the joy which they felt in being counted worthy to suffer for his name, we remember his words, and we discern the fruits of that baptism, wherewith they were baptized on the day of Pentecost. In a heroism, so different from the former conduct of these men, and so manifestly the gift of God, we recognise the spirit which both dictated the prophecy, and brought about the event; and our Lord's prediction of the situation and behaviour of his apostles, when thus compared with the event, furnishes the most striking illustration of his truth, his candour, his knowledge, and his power.

5. We come now to the longest and most circumstantial of our Lord's prophecies. It respects immediately the destruction of Jerusalem: but we shall find that it embraces also the remaining subjects of prophecy which I mentioned, and, in speaking of them, I mean to follow it as my guide.

The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was uttered at a time when Judea was in complete subjection to the Romans. A Roman governor resided in Jerusalem with an armed force; and this state, no longer at en-

* John xv. 19; xvi. 2, 3, 4.

mity with the masters of the world, was regarded as a part of the Roman empire. There was, it is true, a general indignation at the Roman yoke, a tendency in the minds of the people to sedition and tumult, and a fear in the council lest these sentiments should at some time be expressed with such violence, as to provoke the Romans to take away their place and their nation. It was, in fact, the turbulent spirit, and the repeated insurrections of the Jewish people, which did incense the Romans; and a person well acquainted with the disaffection which generally prevailed, and the character of those who felt it, might foresee that the public tranquillity would not continue long, and that this sullen stiff-necked people were preparing for themselves, by their murmurings and violence, more severe chastisements than they had endured, when they were reduced into the form of a Roman province. But although a sagacious enlightened mind, which rose above vulgar prejudices, and looked forward to remote consequences, might foresee such an event, yet the manner of the chastisement, the signs which were to announce its approach, the measure in which it was to be administered, and the length of time during which it was to continue, —all these were out of the reach of human foresight. There is a particularity in this prophecy, by which it is clearly distinguished from the conjectures of wise men. It embraces a multitude of contingencies depending upon the caprice of the people, upon the wisdom of military commanders, upon the fury of soldiers. It describes one certain method of doing that which might have been done in many other ways, a method of subduing a rebellious city very different from the general conduct of the Romans, who were too wise to destroy the provinces which they conquered, and very opposite to the character of Titus the emperor, under whose command Jerusalem was besieged, one of the mildest and gentlest men that ever lived, who, placed at the head of the empire of the world, is called by historians, the love and delight of mankind. The author of a new religion must have been careless of his reputation, and of the success of his scheme, who ventured to foretell such a number of improbable events without knowing certainly that they were to come to pass; and it required not the wisdom of a man, but the Spirit of the God

of knowledge, to foresee that all of them would concur, before the generation that was then alive upon the earth passed away. Yet this prophecy Jesus uttered about forty years before the event. The prophecy was not laid up after it was uttered, like the pretended oracles of the heathen nations, in some repository, where it might be corrected by the event. But, having been brought to the remembrance of those who heard it spoken, by the Spirit which Jesus sent into the hearts of his apostles after his ascension, it was inserted in books which were published before the time of the fulfilment. We know that John lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and it is not certain whether he wrote his Gospel before or after that event. But John has omitted this prophecy altogether. Our knowledge of it is derived from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which were carried by the Christian converts into all parts of the world while Jerusalem stood, which were early translated into different languages, which were quoted by writers in the succeeding age, and were universally held by the first Christians as books of authority, as the standards of faith. In these books thus authenticated to us, we find various intimations of the destruction of Jerusalem, by parables and short hints interwoven in the thread of the history; and all the three contain the same long particular prophecy, with a small variety of expression, but without the least discordance, or even alteration of the sense. The greatest part of this long prophecy has been most strikingly fulfilled, and there are parts, the fulfilment of which is now going on in the world.

We learn the fulfilment of the greater part of this prophecy, not from Christian writers only, but from one author, whose witness is unexceptionable, because it is not the witness of a friend; and who seems to have been preserved by Providence, in order to transmit to posterity a circumstantial account of the siege. Josephus, a Jew, who wrote a history of his country, has left also a relation of that war in which Jerusalem was destroyed. In the beginning of the war he was a commander in Galilee. But being besieged by Vespasian, he fled with forty more, after a gallant resistance, and hid himself in a cave. Vespasian, having discovered their lurking place, offered them their

life. Josephus was willing to accept it. But his companions refused to surrender. With a view to prolong the time, and in hopes of overcoming their obstinacy, he prevailed upon them to cast lots who should die first. The lots were cast two by two: and that God, who disposeth of the lot, so ordered it, that of the forty thirty-nine were killed by the hands of one another, and one only was lef with Josephus. This man yielded to his entreaties; and these two, instead of drawing lots who should kill the other, went together, and offered themselves to Vespasian. The miserable fate of their companions procured them a kind reception; and from that time Josephus remained in the Roman camp, an eye-witness of every thing that happened during the siege. He has the reputation of a diligent faithful historian in his other work. And his very particular account of the siege was revised by Vespasian and Titus, and published by their order. The only impeachment that has ever been brought against the veracity of Josephus is, that, although his history of the Jews comprehends the period in which our Lord lived, he hardly makes mention of his name; and, although exact and minute in every thing else, enters into no detail of the memorable circumstances that attended his appearance, or the influence which it had upon the minds of the people. He takes no notice of this prophecy. A Jewish priest, whose silence betrays enmity to Jesus, certainly did not wish that it should be fulfilled: and yet his history of the siege is a comment upon the prophecy; every word which our Lord utters receiving the clearest explication, and most plainly meeting its event in the narration of this prejudiced Jewish historian.

Archbishop Tillotson, Newton on the Prophecies, Lardner, Jortin, Newcome, and many other writers have made very full extracts from Josephus, and, by setting the narration of the historian over against the prediction of our Lord, have shewn the exact accomplishment of the words of the great Prophet, from the record of a man who did not acknowledge his divine mission. These extracts well deserve your study. But it is not necessary, after the labour which so many learned men have bestowed upon this subject, that I should lead you minutely through the parts of the prophecy. There are, however, some circumstances

upon which I think it of importance to fix your attention. I mean, therefore, to give a distinct account of the occasion which led our Lord to utter this prophecy; and, after collecting briefly the chief points respecting the siege, I shall dwell upon the striking prophecy of the progress of Christianity before that period, which Matthew has preserved in his twenty-fourth chapter.

Our Lord had uttered in the temple, in the hearing of a mixed multitude, a pathetic lamentation over the distress that awaited the Jewish nation. As he goes out of the temple towards the mount of Olives, the usual place of his retirement, the disciples, struck with the severity of an expression he had used, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," as if to move his compassion and mitigate the sentence, point out to him while he passed along, the buildings of the temple, and the goodly stones and gifts with which it was adorned. The great temple, which Solomon had built, was destroyed at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Cyrus permitted the two tribes, who returned to Judea, to rebuild the house of their God. And this second temple was repaired and adorned by Herod the Great, who, having received the crown of Judea from the Romans, thought that the most effectual way of overcoming the prejudices, and obtaining the favour of the Jewish people, was by beautifying and enlarging, after the plan of Solomon's temple, the building which had been hastily erected in the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. It was still accounted the second temple, but was so much improved by the reparation which Herod made, that both Josephus and the Roman historians celebrate the extent, the beauty, and the splendour, of the building. And Josephus mentions, in particular, marble stones of a stupendous size in the foundation, and in different parts of the building. The disciples, we may suppose, point out these stones, lamenting the destruction of such a fabric; or perhaps meaning to insinuate, that it would not be easy for the hand of man to destroy it. But Jesus answered, "Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." It is a proverbial saying, marking the complete destruction of the temple; and there would not, according to the general analogy of language, have been any impropriety in

the use of it, if the temple had been rendered unfit for being a place of worship, although piles of stones had been left standing in the court. But, by the providence of God, even this proverbial expression was fulfilled, according to the literal acceptation of the words. Titus was most solicitous to preserve so splendid a monument of the victories of Rome: and he sent a message to the Jews who had enclosed themselves in the temple, that he was determined to save it from ruin. But they could not bear that the house of their God, the pride and glory of their nation, should fall into the hands of the heathen, and they set fire to the porticoes. A soldier, observing the flames, threw a burning brand in at the window; and others, incensed at the obstinate resistance of the Jews, without regard to the commands or threatenings of their general, who ran to extinguish the flames, continued to set fire to different parts of it, and at length even to the doors of the holy place. "And thus," says Josephus, "the temple was burnt to the ground, against the will of Titus." After it was in this way rendered useless, he ordered the foundations, probably on account of the unusual size of the stones, to be dug up. And Rufus, who commanded the army after his departure, executed this order, by tearing them up with a plough-share; so truly did Micah say of old, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."*

The multitude probably pressing around our Lord as he went out of the temple, the diciples forbear to ask any particular explication of his words, till they come to the Mount of Olives. That mount was at no great distance from Jerusalem, and over against the temple, so that any person sitting upon it had an excellent view of the whole fabric. The disciples, deeply impressed with what they had heard, and anxious to receive the fullest information concerning the fate of the city of their solemnities, now that they are retired from the multitude, come around Jesus upon the mount, and looking down to the temple, say, "Tell us, when shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"†

* Micah iii. 12. † Matt. xxiv. 3.

It is of consequence that you form a clear apprehension of the import of this question. The end of the world, according to the use of that phrase to which our ears are accustomed, means the consummation of all things. And this circumstance, joined with some expressions in the prophecy, has led several interpreters to suppose that the apostles were asking the time of the judgment. But to a Jew, ἡ συντελεια του αιωνος, often conveyed nothing more than the end of the age. Time was divided by the Jews into two great periods, the age of the law and the age of the Messiah. The conclusion of the one was the beginning of the other, the opening of that kingdom which the Jews believed the Messiah was to establish, which was to put an end to their sufferings, and to render them the greatest people upon the earth. The apostles, full of this hope, said to our Lord, immediately before his ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Our Lord used the phrase of his coming, to denote his taking vengeance upon the Jews by destroying their city and temple. "There be some standing here," he said, "that shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."* All that heard him are long since gathered to their fathers, and Jesus has not yet come to judge the world. But John, we know, survived the destruction of Jerusalem. There are two other places in the New Testament where a phrase almost the same with ἡ συντελεια του αιωνος occurs. And in neither does it signify what we call the end of the world. The apostle to the Hebrews, ix. 26, says, "But now once, επι συντελειᾳ των αιωνων hath Christ appeared." At the conclusion of that dispensation under which the blood of bulls and goats was offered upon the altar of God, "Christ appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The apostle to the Corinthians says, "These things are written for our admonition, upon whom are come τα τελη των αιωνων,"† our translation renders it the ends of the world; yet the world has lasted about 1800 years since the apostolic days; the meaning is, the ends of the ages, the conclusion of the one age, and the beginning of the other, are come upon us; for we have seen both.

* Matt. xvi. 28. † 1 Cor. x. 11.

It is agreeable, then, to the phraseology of Scripture and to the expectations of the apostles, to interpret their question here, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" as meaning nothing more than the corresponding question, to which an answer, in substance the same, is given in the 13th chapter of Mark, and the 21st of Luke. What shall be the sign when these things, this prophecy of the destruction of the temple, shall be fulfilled, or come to pass? But the language, in which the question is proposed in Matthew, suggests to us the sentiment which had probably arisen in the minds of the apostles, after hearing the declaration of our Lord, as they walked from the temple to the Mount of Olives. They conceived that the whole frame of the Jewish polity was to be dissolved, that the glorious kingdom of the Messiah was to commence, and that, as all the nations of the earth were to be gathered to this kingdom, and Jerusalem was to be the capital of the world, the temple which now stood, extensive and magnificent as it was, would be too small for the reception of the worshippers, that on this account it was to be laid in ruins, and one much more splendid, more suitable to the dignity of the Messiah, and far surpassing every human work, was to be erected in its stead. Possessed with these exalted imaginations, and anticipating their own dignity in being the ministers of this temple, they come to Jesus and say, "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" The question consists of two parts. They ask the time, and they ask the signs. Our Lord begins with giving a particular answer to the second question. He afterwards limits the time to the existence of the generation then alive upon the earth. But he represses their curiosity as to the day or the hour.

Of the signs mentioned by our Lord, I shall give a short general view, deriving the account of the fulfilment of his words from the history of the events left us by Josephus, and shall then fix your attention upon that prophecy of the general progress of Christianity before the destruction of Jerusalem, which you will find in the 24th chapter of Matthew.

The first sign is the number of false Christs who were to arise in the interval between the prophecy and the

event; impostors who, finding a general expectation of the Messiah, as the seventy weeks of Daniel were conceived to be accomplished, and a disposition to revolt from the Romans, assumed a character corresponding to the wishes of the people. There is frequent reference to these impostors in the book of Acts: and Josephus says, that numbers of them were taken under the government of Felix. They led out the deluded people in crowds, promising to show them great signs, and to deliver them from all their calamities, and thus exposed them to be cut to pieces by the Roman soldiers, as disturbers of the peace. Our Lord graciously warns the apostles not to go after these men; to put no faith in any message which they pretended to bring from him, but to rest satisfied with the directions contained in this prophecy, or hereafter communicated to themselves by his Spirit. While he thus preserves his followers from the destruction which came upon many of the Jews, he enables them, by reading in that destruction the fulfilment of his words, and a proof of his divine character, to derive from the fate of their unwise countrymen an early confirmation of their own faith.

The second sign consists of great calamities which were to happen during the interval. The madness of Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius, butchered many of the Jews; and there was in his reign the rumour of a war, which was likely to be the destruction of the nation. He ordered his statue to be erected in the temple of Jerusalem. Not conceiving why an honour, which was granted to him by the other provinces of the empire, should be refused by Judea; and not being wise enough to respect the religious prejudices of those who were subject to him, he rejected their remonstrances, and persisted in his demand. The Jews had too high a veneration for the house of the true God, to admit of any thing like divine honours being there paid to a mortal, and they resolved to suffer every distress, rather than to give their countenance to the sacrilege of the emperor. Such was the consternation which the rumour of this war spread through Judea, that the people neglected to till their lands, and in despair waited the approach of the enemy. But the death of Caligula removed their fears, and delayed for some time that destruction which he meditated. Although, therefore, says Jesus, you

will find the Jews troubled when these wars arise, as if the end of their state was at hand, be not ye afraid, but know that many things must first be accomplished. What strength was the faith of the apostles to derive from this prophecy, but a few years after our Lord's death, when they heard of rumours of wars, when they beheld the despair of their countrymen, and yet saw the cloud dispelled, and the peace of their country restored! The peace, indeed, was soon interrupted, by frequent engagements between the Jewish and heathen inhabitants of many cities in the province of Syria; by disputes about the bounds of their jurisdiction, amongst the governors of the different tetrarchies or kingdoms into which the land of Palestine was divided; and by the wars arising from the quick succession of emperors, and the violent competitions for the imperial diadem. It was not the sword only that filled with calamity this disastrous interval. The human race, according to the words of this prophecy, suffered under those judgments which proceed immediately from heaven. Josephus has mentioned famine and pestilence, earthquakes in all places of the world where Jews resided, and one in Judea attended with circumstances so dreadful and so unusual, that it was manifest, he says, the whole power of nature was disturbed for the destruction of men.

The third sign is the persecution of the Christians. The sufferings of which we read in the Epistles and the Acts were early aggravated by the famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes with which God at this time afflicted the earth. The Christians were regarded as the causes of these calamities; and the heathen, without inquiring into the nature of their religion, but viewing it as a new pestilential superstition, most offensive to the gods, tried to appease the divine anger, which manifested itself in various judgments, by bringing every indignity and barbarity upon the Christians. The example was set by Nero, who, having in the madness of his wickedness set fire to Rome that he might enjoy the sight of a great city in flames, turned the tide of that indignation, which the report excited, from himself against the Christians, by accusing them of this atrocious crime. He found the people not unwilling to believe any thing of a sect whom they held in abhorrence; and both in this, and in many other instances, the Chris-

tians suffered the most exquisite torments for crimes not their own, and as the authors of calamities which they did not occasion. The persecution which they endured has been well called by one of the oldest apologists for Christianity,* a war against the name, proceeding not from hatred to them as individuals, but from enmity to the name which they bore. "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

The fourth sign is the apostacy and treachery of many who had borne this name. Although persecution naturally tends to unite those who are persecuted, and although the religion of Jesus can boast of an innumerable company of martyrs, who, in the flames witnessed a good confession, yet there were some in the earliest ages who made shipwreck of faith, and endeavoured to gain the favour of the heathen magistrates by informing against their brethren. This apostacy is often severely reprehended in the Epistles of Paul; and the Roman historian speaks of a multitude of Christians who were convicted of bearing the name, upon the evidence of those who confessed first.† It cannot surprise any one who considers the weakness of human nature, that such examples did occur. But it must appear very much to the honour of Jesus, that he adventures to utter such a prophecy. He is not afraid of sowing jealousy and distrust amongst his followers. He knew that many were able to endure the trial of affliction, and he leaves the chaff to be separated from the wheat.

The fifth sign is the multitude of false teachers, men who, either from an attachment to the law of Moses, or from the pride of false philosophy, corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel. This perversion appeared in the days of the apostles. Complaints of it, and warnings against it are scattered through all their Epistles. Neither the sword of the persecutor, nor the wit of the scorner has done so much injury to the cause of Christianity, as the strifes and idle disputes of those who bear his name. Many, in early times, were shaken by the errors of false prophets. Improper sentiments and passions were cherished; the union of Christians was broken, and the religion of love and peace became an occasion of discord. But these corruptions, however

* Justin Martyr.

† Tac. Ann. xv. 44.

disgraceful to Christians, are a testimony both of the candour and the divine knowledge of the author of the Gospel; and even those who perverted his religion fulfilled his words.

We have now gone through those signs which announced the destruction of Jerusalem, and we are come to the circumstances, marked in the prophecy, which happened during the siege.

The first is, Jerusalem being compassed with armies, or, as Matthew expressed it, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place. There were commonly engraved upon the Roman standards, after the times of the republic, the images of those emperors whom admiration or flattery had translated into the number of gods. The soldiers were accustomed to swear by these images, to worship them, and to account them the gods of battle. The Jews, educated in an abhorrence of idolatry, could not bear that images, before whom men thus bowed, should be brought within the precincts of their city: and soon after the death of our Lord, they requested a Roman general, Vitellius, who was leading troops through Judea against an enemy of the emperor, to take another road, because, said they, it is not πατριον ἡμιν to behold from our city any images. With strict propriety, then, the dark expression of Daniel, which had not till that time been understood, is interpreted by our Lord as meaning the offensive images of a great multitude of standards brought within that space, a circumference of two miles round the city which was accounted holy, in order to render the city desolate; and he mentions this as the signal to his followers to fly from the low parts of Judea to the mountains. It may appear to you too late to think of flying, after the Roman armies were seen from Jerusalem. But the manner in which the siege was conducted justified the wisdom of this advice. A few years before Titus destroyed Jerusalem, Cestius Gallus laid siege to it; he might have taken the city if he had persevered; but without any reason that was known, says Josephus, he suddenly led away his forces. And after his departure many fled from the city as from a sinking ship. Vespasian, too, was slow in his approaches to the city; and by the distractions which at that time took

place in the government of Rome, was frequently diverted from executing his purpose; so that the Christians, to whom the first appearance of Cestius's army brought an explanation of the words of Jesus, by following his directions, escaped entirely from the carnage of the Jews. Our Lord warns his disciples of the imminency of the danger, and urges them, by various expressions, to the greatest speed in their flight. The reason of this urgency is explained by Josephus. After Titus sat down before Jerusalem, he surrounded the city with a wall, which was finished in three days, so that none could escape; and factions were by that time become so violent, that none were allowed to surrender. The party called zealots, who in their zeal for the law of Moses, and in the hope of receiving deliverance from heaven, thought it their duty to resist the Romans to the last extremity, put to death all who attempted to desert, and thus assisted the enemy in enclosing an immense multitude within this devoted city. With what gracious foresight does the divine prophet guard his followers against this complication of evils, and repeat his warning in the most striking words, in order to convince all who paid regard to what he said, that their only safety lay in flight!

A second circumstance, by which our Lord marks this siege, is the unparalleled distress that was then to be endured. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." It is a very strong expression, of itself sufficient to distinguish this prophecy from conjecture. And the expression, strong as it appears, is so strictly applicable to the subject, that we find almost the same words in Josephus, who certainly did not copy them from Jesus. "In my opinion," he says, "all the calamities which ever were endured since the beginning of the world were inferior to those which the Jews now suffered. Never was any city more wicked, and never did any city receive such punishment. Without was the Roman army, surrounding their walls, crucifying thousands before their eyes, and laying waste their country: within were the most violent contentions among the besieged, frequent bloody battles between different parties, rapine, fire, and the extremity of famine. Many of the Jews prayed for the suc-

cess of the Romans, as the only method to deliver them from a more dreadful calamity, the atrocious violence of their civil dissensions."

A third circumstance mentioned by our Lord is the shortening of the siege. Josephus computes that there fell, during the siege, by the hands of the Romans, and by their own faction, 1,100,000 Jews. Had the siege continued long, the whole nation would have perished. But the Lord shortened the days for the elect's sake: the elect, that is, in Scripture language, the Christians, both those Jews within the city, whom this fulfilment of the words of Jesus was to convert to Christianity, and those Christians who, according to the directions of their Master, had fled out of the city at the approach of the Roman army, and were then living in the mountains. The manner in which the days were shortened is most striking. Vespasian committed the conduct of the siege to Titus, then a young man, impatient of resistance, jealous of the honour of the Roman army, and in haste to return from the conquest of an obscure province to the capital of the empire. He prosecuted the siege with vigour; he invited the besieged to yield, by offering them peace; and he tried to intimidate them, by using, contrary to his nature, every species of cruelty against those who fell into his hands. But all his vigour, and all his arts, would have been in vain, had it not been for the madness of those within. They fought with one another; they burned, in their fury, magazines of provisions sufficient to last them for years; and they deserted with a foolish confidence strong holds, out of which no enemy could have dragged them. After they had thus delivered their city into his hands, Titus, when he was viewing it, said, "God has been upon our side. Neither the hands nor the machines of men could have been of any avail against those towers. But God has pulled the Jews out of them, that he might give them to us." It was impossible for Titus to restrain the soldiers, irritated by an obstinate resistance, from executing their fury against the besieged. But his native clemency spared the Jews in other places. He would not allow the senate of Antioch, that city in which the disciples were first called Christians, to expel the Jews; for where, said he, shall these people go, now that we have destroyed their city?

Titus was the servant of God to execute his vengeance on Jerusalem. But when the measure of that vengeance was fulfilled, the compassion of this amiable prince was employed to restrain the wrath of man. "The Lord shortened the days."

A fourth circumstance is the number of false Christs, men, of whom we read in Josephus, who, both during the siege and after it, kept up the spirits of the people, and rendered them obstinate in their resistance, by giving them hopes that the Messiah was at hand to deliver them out of all their calamities. The greater the distress was, the people were the more disposed to catch at this hope; and, therefore, it was necessary for our Lord to warn his disciples against being deluded by it.

The last circumstance is the extent of this distress. Our Lord has employed a bold figure. But the boldest of his figures are always literally true: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be: For wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." The Roman army, who were at this time the servants of the Son of man, entered on the east side of Judea, and carried their devastation westward; so that, in this grand image, the very direction of the ruin, as well as the suddenness of it, is painted: and it extended to every place where the Jews were to be found. A gold or silver eagle, borne on the top of a spear, belonged to every legion, and was always carried along with it. Wheresover the carcase—the Jewish people who were judicially condemned by God—was, there were also those eagles. There was no part of Judea, says Josephus, which did not partake of the miseries of the capital; and the history of the Jewish war ends with numbering the thousands who fell in other places of the world also by the Roman sword.

I have thus led you, as particularly as appears to me to be necessary, through the prophecy of our Lord respecting the signs which announced the destruction of Jerusalem, and the circumstances which attended the siege; and I wish now to fix your attention upon a particular prediction interwoven in this prophecy, concerning the progress of Christianity previous to that period, both because the subject renders it interesting, and because the place which

our Lord has given it in this prophecy, opens a most instructive and enlarged view of the economy of the divine dispensations.

6. The prediction is—"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end" of the Jewish state "come."

We find our Lord always speaking with confidence of the establishment of his religion in the world. It is a confidence which could not reasonably be inspired by any thing he beheld: multitudes following him out of curiosity, but easily offended, and at length demanding his crucifixion—a few unlearned, feeble men, affectionately attached indeed to his person, but with very imperfect apprehensions of his religion, and devoid of the most likely instruments of spreading even their own apprehensions through the world—a world which hated him while he lived, and which he knew was to hate his disciples after his death—a world, consisting of Jews, wedded to their own religion, and abhorring his doctrine as an impious attempt to supersede the law of Moses; and of heathens, amongst whom the philosophers, full of their own wisdom, despised the simplicity of the Gospel, and the vulgar, devoted to childish abominable superstitions, and averse from the spiritual worship of the Gospel, were disposed to execute the vengeance of jealous malignant deities upon a body of men who refused to offer incense at their altars—a world, too, in which every kind of vice abounded—in which the passions of men demanded indulgence, and spurned at the restraint of the holy commandment of Jesus. Yet, in these circumstances, with such obstacles, our Lord, conscious of his divine character, and knowing that the Spirit was given to him without measure, foretels, with perfect assurance, that his Gospel shall be preached in all the world. Had he fixed no time, this prophecy, bold as it is, might have been regarded as one of the acts by which an impostor tries to raise the spirits of his followers; and we should have heard it said, that, instead of a mark of the spirit of prophecy, there was here only the sagacity of a man, who, aware of the wonderful revolutions in the opinions and manners of men, trusting that, in some succeeding age, after some other systems had, in their turn, been exploded, his system might become fashionable, had

ventured to say, that it should be preached in all the world, and left the age which should see this publication to convert an indefinite expression into an accomplished prophecy. But here is nothing indefinite—a pointed, precise declaration, which no impostor, who was anxious about the success of his system, would have hazarded, and concerning the truth of which, many of that generation amongst whom he lived remained long enough upon earth to be able to judge. The end, by the connexion of the words with the context, means the conclusion of the age of the law; and it is still more clearly said, in the 13th chapter of Mark, in the middle of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, "But the Gospel must first be published to all nations." Now, the destruction of Jerusalem happened within forty years after the death of our Saviour, so that we are restricted to this space of time in speaking of the fulfilment of the prophecy. We learn from the book of Acts, that many thousands were converted soon after the day of Pentecost, and that devout Jews out of every nation under heaven were witnesses of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost. These men, all of whom were amazed, and some of whom were converted, by what they saw, could not fail to carry the report home, and thus prepared distant nations for receiving those who were better qualified, and more expressly commissioned, to preach the Gospel. After the death of Stephen, there arose a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem, which by this time had multiplied exceedingly; and they "were scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria; and they travelled as far as Phœnice, and Cyprus, and Antioch; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed."* The book of Acts is chiefly an account of the labours of the Apostle Paul; and we see this one apostle, to adopt the words of a fellow-labourer of his, a preacher both in the East, and to the utmost boundaries of the West, planting churches in Asia and in Greece, and travelling from Jerusalem to Illyricum, a tract which has been computed to be not less than 2000 miles. If such were the labours of one, what must have been accomplished by the journeyings of all the twelve, who, taking differ-

* Acts viii. 1.; xi. 19, 20.

ent districts, went forth to fulfil the last command of their master, by being his witnesses to the uttermost ends of the earth? The Apostle Paul says, in his Epistle to the Romans, "that their faith was spoken of throughout all the world;" and to the Colossians, "that the word which they had heard was by that time preached to every creature." We know certainly that Paul preached the Gospel in Rome; and such was the effect of his preaching, that, seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Tacitus says there was an immense number of Christians in that city.* From the capital of the world the knowledge of Christianity was spread, like all the improvements in art and science, over the world; that is, according to the common sense of the phrase, throughout the Roman empire. When the whole known world was governed by one prince, the communication was easy. In every part of the empire garrisons were stationed—roads were opened—messengers were often passing—and no country then discovered was too distant to hear the Gospel of the kingdom. It is generally agreed, that within the forty years which I mentioned, Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Æthiopia on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ: and we know that the island of Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, the most remote and savage province, was frequently visited during that time by Roman emperors and their generals. It is even said that the Gospel was preached publicly in London ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem. As far, then, as our information goes, whether we collect it from the book of Acts, from the occasional mention made by heathen historians of a subject upon which they bestowed little attention, or from the concurring testimony of the oldest Christian historians, the word of Christ was literally fulfilled; and you have, in the short space of time to which he limits the fulfilment of this word, a striking proof of his prophetic spirit.

But it is not enough to attend to the fulfilment of this prophecy. The place which it holds, and the manner in which it is expressed, suggest to us something farther. The Gospel, at whatsoever time it be published, is a witness

* Tacit. Ann. lib. xv. 44.

to those who hear it, of the being, the providence, and the moral government of God. But, as it is said, "it shall be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come," we are led to consider that particular kind of witness which the preaching of the Gospel, before the end of the Jewish state, afforded to all nations; and it is here, I said, that there opens to us a most instructive and enlarged view of the economy of the divine dispensations.

Had it not been for this early and universal preaching, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus would have appeared to the world an event of the same order with the destruction of any other city. They might have talked of the obstinacy of the besieged—of the fury of the conquerors—of the unexampled distress which was endured; but it would not have appeared to them that there was in all this any thing divine, any other warning than is suggested by the ordinary fortune of war. But when the Gospel was first published, it was a witness to all nations, that in the end of the Jewish state there was a fulfilment of the prophecy—a punishment of infidelity—and the termination of the law of Moses.

1. It was a witness of the fulfilment of prophecy. Wherever the first preachers of Christianity went, they carried the Gospels along with them, as the authentic history of Him whom they preached. We have reason to think, that in many parts of the world the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were translated into the language of the country, or into the Latin, which was generally understood, before Jerusalem was destroyed. The early Christians, then, in the most distant parts of the world, had in their hands the prophecy before the event. The Roman armies, and the messengers of the empire, would soon transmit a general account of the siege. The history of Josephus, written and published by the order of Vespasian and Titus, would transmit the particulars to some at least of the most illustrious commanders in distant provinces; and thus, while all who named the name of Christ would learn the fact, that Jerusalem was destroyed, they who were inquisitive might learn also the circumstances of the fact, and by comparing the narration which they received, with the prophecy of which they had been

formerly in possession, would know assuredly that he who had uttered that prophecy was more than man. There are still great events to happen in the history of the Christian church, which we trust will bring to those who shall be permitted to see them a full conviction of the divine character of Jesus. But it was wisely ordered, that the earliest Christians should receive this prophecy long before it came to pass, that the faith of those who had not seen the Lord's Christ, might, at a time when education, authority, and example, were not on the side of that faith, be confirmed by the event; and that all the singular circumstances of this siege might afford to the nations of the earth, in the beginnings of the Gospel, a demonstration that Jesus spake the truth.

2. A witness of the punishment of infidelity. The destruction of Jerusalem was foretold, not merely to give an example of the divine knowledge of him who uttered the prophecy, but because the Jews deserved that destruction. The crime which brought it upon them is intimated in many of our Lord's parables, and is declared clearly in other passages, so that those who were in possession of the prophecy could not mistake the cause. All the nations of the earth to whom the Gospel was preached, knew that the Jews had killed the Lord Jesus with this horrid imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;" that they had rejected all the evidences of the truth of Christianity which were exhibited in their own land, and not content with despising the Gospel, had stirred up the minds of the heathen against the disciples of Jesus, and appeared, so long as their city existed, the most bitter enemies of the Christian name. The nations of the earth saw this obstinacy and barbarity recompensed in the very manner which the Author of the Gospel foretold, and having his predictions in their hands, they beheld his enemies taken in the snare which he had announced. The mighty works which he did upon earth were miracles of mercy, by which he meant to win the hearts of mankind. But the execution of his threatenings against a nation of enemies was a miracle of judgment. And the unparalleled calamities, which the Jews, according to his words, endured, were a warning from heaven to all that heard the Gospel, not to reject the counsel of God against themselves.

3. A witness that, in the destruction of Jerusalem, there was the termination of the law of Moses. While many Jews persecuted the Christians, there were others who attempted, by reasoning, to impose upon them an observance of the law of Moses. They said that it was impious to forsake an institution confessedly of divine original, and that no subsequent revelation could diminish the sanctity of a temple built by God, or abolish the offerings which he had required to be presented there. You find this reasoning most ably combated in the Epistles of Paul, and particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the arguments of the apostle did not completely counterbalance the evil done, by the Judaizing teachers, to the cause of Christ. Many were disturbed by the sophistry of these men in the exercise of their Christian liberty; and many were deterred from embracing the Gospel, by the fear of being brought under the yoke of the Jewish ceremonies. Some signal interposition of Providence was necessary to disjoin the spiritual universal religion of Jesus from the carnal local ordinances of the law of Moses, and to afford entire satisfaction to the minds of those who wished for that disjunction. The destruction of Jerusalem was that interposition; and the general publication of the Gospel, before that event, led men both to look for it as the solution of their doubts, and to rest in it after it happened, as the declaration from heaven that the ceremonial law was finished. The service of the temple could not continue after one stone of the temple was not left upon another; the tribes could no longer assemble at Jerusalem after the city was laid in ruins; and that bondage, under which the Jewish nation wished to bring the Christians, ceased after the Jews were scattered over the face of the earth.

And thus we are enabled, by the place which this prophecy holds, to mark a beautiful consistency, and a mutual dependency in the revelations with which God hath favoured the world,—the manifold wisdom of God conspicuous in the whole economy of religion. The Almighty committed to Abraham and his descendants the hope of the Messiah, and the law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. When he who was the end of the law appeared, he appealed to Moses and the prophets as testifying of him, and he claimed the character of that prophet

whom they had announced. But the purpose of the law being fulfilled by his appearance, it was no longer necessary that the preparatory dispensation with its appurtenances should continue. He gave notice, therefore, of the conclusion of the age of the law, and as that age began and was conducted with visible symbols of divine power, so with like symbols it was finished. The declaration of these symbols, published to the world in the Gospels, prevented them from looking upon the event with the astonishment of ignorance, and taught them to connect this awful ending of the one age with the character of that age which then commenced. Having seen a period elapse sufficient for the faith of Christ to gain proselytes in many countries, they saw the temple of Jerusalem by an interposition which was the literal fulfilment of the words of Christ taken down, and were thus assured that the hour was indeed come at which ancient prophets had more obscurely hinted, and which Jesus had declared in express words as not very distant, when men were not to worship the Father at Jerusalem, but when the true worshippers, every one from his place, should worship God in spirit and in truth. The effect of the event, thus interpreted by the prophecy, was powerful and instantaneous. It furnished the earliest Christian fathers with an unanswerable argument against the Judaizing teachers: it solved the doubts of those who were stumbled by their reasonings: it removed one great objection which the Gentiles had to the Gospel: and when the wall of partition was thus removed, numbers were "turned from idols to serve the living God."

7. I mentioned as the next subject of the predictions of Jesus, the condition of the Jewish nation subsequent to the destruction of their city.

You may mark first the immediate consequences of the siege. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." It seems to be plain that these expressions point to the consequences of the siege, for they are thus introduced, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," *i. e.* the distress endured

during the siege; and as if on purpose to show us that the event pointed at was not very distant, it is said a few verses after, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." To perceive the propriety of using such expressions in this place, you will recollect that symbolical language of which we spoke formerly,—dictated by necessity in early times, when the conceptions and the words of men were few,—retained in after times partly from habit, and partly to render speech more significant,—universally used in eastern countries,—and abounding in the writings of the prophets, who, speaking under the influence of inspiration, full of the events which they foretold, and elevated above the ordinary tone of their minds, employ a richness and pomp of imagery which exalts our conceptions of the importance of what they say, but at the same time increases the obscurity natural to prophecies, and made the people whom they addressed often call their discourses dark sayings. This eastern imagery, which pervades the prophetical style, is especially remarkable when the rise or fall of kingdoms is foretold. The images are then borrowed from the most splendid objects; and as in the ancient mode of writing by hieroglyphics, the sun, the moon, and stars, being bodies raised above the earth, were used to represent kingdoms and princes, so in the prophecies of their calamities, or prosperity, changes upon the heavenly bodies, bright light, and thick darkness came to be a common phraseology. Of the punishment which God was to inflict on Judea, he says by Jeremiah, "I will stretch out my hand against thee and destroy thee; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down, while it is yet day."* Of Egypt, by Ezekiel, "All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and make darkness over thy land, saith the Lord God."† So by Joel, "The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army."‡ And when God promises deliverance and victory to his people, it is in these beautiful words, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon

* Jer. xv. 6, 9.
† Ezek. xxxii. 8.
‡ Joel ii. 10, 11.

withdraw itself. But the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold."* It was most natural for the Messiah of the Jews to introduce this uniform language of former prophets in foretelling the dissolution of their state; and all that he says was fulfilled, according to the appropriated use of that language, immediately after the siege. For the city was desolated; the temple was burnt; that ecclesiastical constitution which the Romans had tolerated after Judea became a province of the empire was dissolved; the Sanhedrim no longer assembled; the office of the High Priest could no more be exercised according to the commandment of God; every privilege which had distinguished the people of the Jews ceased; the sceptre, in appearance as well as in reality, departed from Judah, and the very forms of the dispensation given by Moses came to an end.

As changes upon the kingdoms of the earth are produced by the all-ruling providence of God, so the ancient prophets often represent him in their figurative language as coming in the clouds of heaven to execute vengeance upon a guilty nation; and Daniel applies this language to the exertion of the power of the Son of Man, when he was to take away the dominion of the four beasts whom Daniel had seen in his vision, and to give the kingdom to the saints of the Most High.† You find our Lord referring to this expression, which was familiar to every Jew. Immediately after the distress of the siege you shall see the sign of the Son of man in heaven. The sign which you have been taught to look for is not a comet, or meteor, a wonderful appearance in the air to astonish the ignorant: it is the Son of man employing the Roman armies as his servants, to execute vengeance upon those who crucified him, and demonstrating to the world, by the complete dissolution of the Jewish state, that all power is committed to him.

The first part, then, of our Lord's prophecy concerning the condition of the Jewish people subsequent to the siege, although expressed in sublime and figurative language, may be understood, by the analogy of the prophetical style, to mean, that the political and ecclesiastical

* Isaiah lx. 20; xxx. 26.

† Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27.

constitution of Judea was to be annihilated immediately after that event.

But you may observe in Luke another prophecy concerning their condition, reaching to a remote period, and marking events, in their nature, most contingent. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* Not only shall the city be taken, and the constitution be dissolved, and many Jews fall by the edge of the sword, and many be led captive into all nations; but Jerusalem shall belong to the Gentiles, and be used by them in a contemptuous manner till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. As this prediction, when taken in connexion with other passages of Scripture, means a great deal more than is obvious at first sight, and as the present state of the Jews is one of the strongest visible arguments for the truth of Christianity, I shall lay before you the history of Jerusalem since it was taken, the condition of the Jewish people during the desolation of their city, and that prospect of a better time which is intimated in the concise expression of our Lord.

The history of Jerusalem, from the time of its being destroyed by Titus till this day, is a literal fulfilment of the expression, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." The emperor Adrian conceived the design of rebuilding Jerusalem about forty-seven years after its destruction. He planted a Roman colony there, and in place of the temple of the God of the Jews he erected a temple to Jupiter. The Jews, who inhabited the other parts of Judea, inflamed by this insulting act of sacrilege, engaged in open rebellion against the Romans, and, assembling in vast multitudes, got possession of their city, and kept it for a short time. But Adrian soon expelled them, demolished their towns and castles, desolated the land of Judea, and scattered those who survived over the face of the earth. He re-established the Roman colony in Jerusalem, gave it a new name, and forbade any Jew to enter it. Three hundred years after the death of our Saviour, Constantine, the first Roman emperor who embraced Christianity, built many splendid Christian churches in this Roman colony, and dispersed the Jews who at-

* Luke xxi. 24.

tempted to disturb the Christians in their worship. Within thirty years after the death of Constantine, the Emperor Julian, who is known by the name of the Apostate, because, although he had been bred a Christian, he became a heathen, out of hatred to the Christians, and with a view to defeat the prophecy, invited the body of the Jewish people scattered through the empire, to return to their city; and professing to lament the oppression which they had endured, gave orders for rebuilding their temple. His lieutenants did begin. But, says the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, whose respectable authority there is no reason in this instance to question, balls of fire bursting forth near the foundation made it impossible for the workmen to approach the place, and the enterprise was laid aside.* Julian did not reign above two years; and as all the emperors who succeeded him were Christians, no attempt was ever made to rebuild the temple, and the Jews were prohibited from living in the city. It was only by stealth, or by bribing the guards, that they obtained a sight of the ruins of their temple. In the year 637, Jerusalem was taken by the successors of the great impostor Mahomet. A mosque was built upon the very spot where the temple of Solomon had stood; and this mosque was afterwards so much enlarged and beautified, that it became the resort of the Mahometans in the adjoining countries, in the same manner as the temple had been of the Jews. Since that time it has passed, in the succession of conquests made by different nations and tribes, through the hands of the Turks, the Egyptians, and the Mamelukes. It was for some time in possession of Christians, who, having marched from Europe at the era of the Crusades, to deliver their brethren in the holy land from oppression, and to rescue the sepulchre of our Lord out of the hands of Mahometans, took Jerusalem, and established a kingdom which lasted about a century. The Christian forces were at length expelled; the Mamelukes, and after them the Ottoman Turks, regained the city, and till this day the Mahometan worship is established there. Christians, who are drawn thither by reverence for the place where our Lord lay, are admitted to reside; and their worship is tolerated upon their paying a large tribute.

* Amm. Marcel. lib. xxiii.

But hardly any Jews are to be seen in the city. They consider it as so much defiled by the Mahometans and Christians, that they choose rather to worship God in any other place. They are persecuted by the reigning power. And the poverty of the city does not afford them much temptation in the way of gain to counterbalance the inconveniencies to which they would be obliged to submit if they attempted to live there. Jerusalem then, is still trodden down of the Gentiles. During the seventeen hundred years that have elapsed since it was destroyed by Titus, the Jews have never been quietly settled there. It has, with hardly any interruption, belonged to Gentile nations; and it has received every thing which the Jews account a pollution.

You will attend next to the condition of the Jewish people during this desolation of their city. Amongst the many striking circumstances in the history of the ancient Jews, every intelligent observer will reckon the frequent dispersions of that unhappy people. Most other nations, when subdued by a warlike or powerful neighbour, have continued to inhabit some portion of their ancient territory. They have either adopted the laws and manners of their conquerors, and in process of time have been so completely incorporated with them, as not to form a distinct body; or if the cruel policy of the conquerors marked out for them a humbler station, they have descended from their former rank of freemen, without changing their climate, and have remained as servants in the land of which they were once the masters. But the conquerors of Judea in all ages, not content with the subjection of the inhabitants, transplanted them into other countries, and in distant lands marked out the cities which they were to possess, and the fields which they were to cultivate. Thus Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, took away the ten tribes of Israel, and planted them beyond the river Euphrates, in the cities of the Medes. Nebuchadnezzar, 130 years after, carried the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin captive to Babylon; and the Romans also at a later period led the Jews captive into all nations. Whatever were the motives which led the enemies of the Jews to adopt this singular system of policy, in following it out, they only fulfilled the appointment of heaven: and the kings of Assyria and Babylon, and the emperors of Rome, although they meant it not so in their hearts, yet by the

peculiar sufferings which they brought upon the captive nation, were the instruments of accomplishing the prophecies contained in its sacred books. Moses, amongst other curses which were to overtake the children of Israel in case of disobedience, mentions this: "I will make thy cities waste, and I will bring the land into desolation; and thine enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. The Lord shall bring against thee a nation from far, and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down. And ye shall be plucked off the land whither thou goest to possess it; and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other."* The frequent captivities and dispersions of the Jews corresponded exactly to the words of the curse; and this singular punishment has been repeated as often as the sins of the nation called for the judgments of heaven.

It might have been expected that, by these frequent dispersions, the whole race of the Jews would be confounded amongst other nations. But it is most remarkable, that although distinguished from all other people by being scattered over the face of the earth, they remain distinguished also by their religion and customs; and although everywhere found, they are everywhere separated from those around them. I speak not of the ten tribes carried away by Esarhaddon, who were so far estranged from the true God before they left their own land, that they easily adopted the idolatry of the nations to which they were led captive, and so ceased to be a people.† But I speak of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, composing what was properly called the kingdom of Judah, which adhered to the family of David after Israel had rebelled against them, to which the promise of the Messiah had been restricted by the patriarch Jacob, and in which the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the fortunes of the Jewish nation is to be looked for. Now we know that when Judah was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, the captives did not worship the gods of the conquerors. Daniel and other great men were raised up by

* Levit. xxvi. 31, 32; Deut. xxviii. passim.
† Buchanan's Christian Researches.

God to preserve the spirit of piety, and the fortitude of the servants of heaven. And by a concurrence of circumstances which the providence of God combined to fulfil his pleasure, those who were for the God of Israel received an invitation to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. The edict of Cyrus king of Persia contained these words:* "The Lord of heaven hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel." It was under the character of the servants of God, by which character they were distinguished from their idolatrous neighbours, that the Jews returned; and the calamities which they had suffered during their captivity, seem to have cured that proneness to idolatry, which the more ancient prophets so often reprove. All that returned are spoken of in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as zealous for the worship of the true God. Their descendants, who settled and multiplied in the Holy Land, never showed any inclination to worship idols. They endured a severe persecution under Antiochus, because they would not submit to the worship which he prescribed; and one of the causes which incensed the Romans against them was their abhorrence of the gods of the empire. Since their dispersion by Titus and by Adrian, they have never joined in Heathen, Christian, or Mahometan worship. Their rites, burdensome as they are, and contemptible as they appear in the eyes of strangers, have been religiously observed by the whole nation. A sullen, uncomplying, covetous spirit, has conspired with the singularity of their rites to render them odious and ridiculous. The character of a Jew is marked in every corner of the earth; and one can find no words which so literally express the condition of this people, as the words uttered more than 3000 years ago by their own lawgiver. "These curses shall come upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever; and thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee."† In this wonderful manner have the Jews, whose native land is still

* Ezra i. 2, 3. † Deut. xxviii. 37, 46.

trodden down of the Gentiles, been preserved in all parts of the earth a distinct people.

But the prediction brings into our view the prospect of a better time: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" which, in plain grammatical construction, implies, that when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down. Our Lord is referring to the latter part of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks: "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and —he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate;" or, as I am assured by the best authority, it may be rendered, "upon the desolator."* Now, this consummation, what the Septuagint calls ἡ συντελεια του καιρου, is to be learned from other parts of the book of Daniel, in which there is a most circumstantial prophecy of the fate of the great empires of the world, and, amongst the rest, of the empire of the Romans, who were the desolators of Judea.† A great part of that prophecy has been fulfilled. Learned men have traced so striking a coincidence between the words of Daniel and the history of the world, as is sufficient to impress every candid mind with the divine inspiration of this prophet, highly favoured of the Lord, and to beget a full conviction, that every word which he has spoken will in due time be accomplished. When that will be, or how it will be, we know not. But as the events that have already happened have reflected the clearest light upon former parts of the prophecy, we may rest assured that the end, when it arrives, will explain those parts which are still dark, and that there are methods in reserve, by which the times of the Gentiles, that which is determined upon the desolator, all the purposes of God's providence respecting the kingdoms which have arisen out of the Roman empire, shall be fulfilled. It is perfectly agreeable to our Lord's words, to consider the return of the Jews to their own land as connected with this end, the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles: and when we take into our view other parts of Scripture, hardly any doubt is left in

* Dan. ix. 26, 27. † Dan. ii. and vii.

our minds that this was his meaning. Moses, when he threatens the Jews with dispersion, gives notice, that if, in their captivity, they returned to the Lord, he would gather them from the nations to which he had scattered them: "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God."* You find this hope expressed by David, by Solomon, by Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Accordingly the two tribes who remembered the God of their fathers, in fulfilment of this promise, as Nehemiah interprets their deliverance, were gathered from their captivity. After their return, the same threatenings of dispersion were denounced against them if they disobeyed, and the same promises of being brought back if they repented. Zechariah, who prophesied after the return, says, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem, and the city shall be taken." But he says also, the day is coming when "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication."† And this is agreeable to the words of more ancient prophets: for God says by Jeremiah, "Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee;"‡ and by Amos, "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled out of the land which I have given them."§ These prophecies, and many others of the same import, open to our view a time when the Jews are to be brought back from captivity. Their return from Babylon, which was a fulfilment of their own prophecies, is a pledge that the greater promise of an everlasting settlement in their own land shall be fulfilled also. Their being to this day a distinct people, separate from all others, renders the fulfilment of the prophecy possible, and seems intended as a standing miracle to keep alive in the world the faith of this event. Our Lord, at the very time when he foretells the destruction of the holy city, and the second long captivity of the Jews, intimates,

* Levit. xxvi. 44.
† Zech. xiv. 2; xii. 9, 10.
‡ Jer. xxx. 11.
§ Amos ix. 15.

by his mode of expression, that it was not to be perpetual: and his apostle Paul, to whom Jesus, after his ascension, revealed the whole counsel of God, delights to dwell upon this thought—"I would not, brethren," he says to the Romans, "that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved."*

What a glorious view is here presented of the universal kingdom of the Messiah, which is at length to comprehend even the children of those who slew him! What a consistency and grandeur in the conduct of divine Providence with regard to the Jews, that people whom God formed for himself to show forth his praise! Raised up at first as a light in a dark place—retaining the knowledge and worship of the true God amidst the idolatry of the nations—keeping in their oracles the hope of the Saviour of mankind—carrying by their dispersions these oracles, this knowledge and hope, through the whole earth, and thus rendering the Messiah the desire of all nations—exhibiting in their singular misfortunes the holiness and the power of their God—a monument to the world in their present state, that Jesus is able to take vengeance of his enemies—and yet preserved, even in the midst of that punishment which they endure for obstinacy and infidelity, to receive Christ as a nation, and thus to be the future instruments of the conversion of the whole world! When this people, by the out-stretched arm of the Almighty, shall be brought back in his time from the lands where they now sojourn, to that land which, in the beginning, he chose for them, and Jerusalem, which is now trodden down of the Gentiles, shall be delivered to the Jews; when every prophecy in their books shall be found to conspire most exactly with the words spoken by Christ and his apostles, and all shall receive a striking accomplishment in events most interesting to the whole universe—what eye will be so sealed as to exclude this light, what mind so hardened as not to yield to a conviction which the infinite knowledge and power of God will then appear to have united in producing! Every charge of partiality in the Lord of nature, which the superficial infidel is hasty to bring forward,

* Rom. xi. 25.

shall then be swallowed up in the full exposition of that great scheme which is now carrying forward for the final salvation of all the children of God, and every tongue will join in that expression of exalted devotion with which the Apostle Paul shuts up this subject—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?"*

8. I mentioned, as the last subject of our Lord's prophecies, the final discrimination of the righteous and the wicked at the day of judgment. This great event is foretold under similitudes, in plain words, without hesitation, with solemnity, with minuteness. The veil is in some measure removed, and we, whose views are generally confined to the events of the little spot which we inhabit, are enabled by the great Prophet to look forward to the end of the world. He has, indeed, hidden the time from our eyes, but he has minutely described every other circumstance. The clearness of his predictions upon such a subject distinguishes him from every other teacher who had appeared before his time, and affords a presumption of his divine character. But this is not the place for enlarging upon these predictions, and I mention them at present, only to state the connexion between them and the prophecy which we have been considering. The darkening of the sun, and moon, and stars—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven—his sending forth his angels with a trumpet, and gathering his elect from the four winds; all these circumstances bring to our minds a day more awful and important than the destruction of Jerusalem, or any of its immediate consequences. And although it is possible, and agreeable to the analogy of Scripture language, to find a meaning for the various expressions here used, in the dissolution of the Jewish state, in the general publication of the gospel after that event, and the great accession of converts which it contributed to bring to Christianity—yet we know that these are the very expressions by which our Lord and his apostles have described that day, when all who have lived upon the face of the

* Rom. xi. 33, 34.

earth shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Several commentators have been of opinion that there is here, in addition to the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, a direct prophecy of the day of judgment. But the limitation of the time of the fulfilment to the existence of the generation then alive, is an unanswerable objection to this opinion; and, therefore, I consider the latter part of this prediction as a specimen given by our Lord of a prophecy with a double sense. We found that, in the Old Testament, the language of the prophet is often so contrived as to apply at once to two events, the one near and local, the other remote and universal. Thus David, in describing his own sufferings, introduces expressions which are a literal description of the sufferings of the Messiah, and are applied as such by the Evangelists; and the words in which he paints the peaceful reign of Solomon, received a literal accomplishment in the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. So here the Messiah, who often, in other respects, copies the manner, and refers to the words of ancient prophets, while he is immediately foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, looks forward to the day of judgment, and expresses himself in a language which, although, by the established practice of the prophets, it is applicable in a figurative sense to the fall of a city and the dissolution of a state, yet in its true, literal, precise meaning, applies to that day in which all cities and states are equally interested. While the fulfilment then of the direct sense of this prophecy is a standing proof of the divine knowledge of Jesus, it is also a pledge, that the secondary sense shall in due time be accomplished; and thus the exhortation with which our Lord concludes this prophecy, and which is manifestly expressed in such a manner, as shows that it was intended for his disciples in every age, is enforced upon us as well as upon those that heard him. The Christians were delivered from the destruction in which their countrymen were involved, by following the directions of Jews; and upon our watchfulness and obedience to him depend our comfort, our improvement, and the salvation of our souls in the great day of the Lord.

Josephus, Hurd, and Commentaries on the 24th chapter of Matthew, in the works of Tillotson, Jortin, Newton, Newcome, &c.

CHAP. VIII.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

MANY of the principal facts in the Christian religion may be introduced as instances of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jesus, and as thus serving to illustrate the abundant measure in which the spirit of prophecy was given to that Great Prophet, who had been announced from the beginning of the world. But two of these facts deserve a more particular consideration in a view of the evidences of Christianity, because, independently of their having been foretold, they bring a very strong confirmation to the high claim advanced in the Scriptures. The two facts which I mean are, the resurrection of Jesus, and the propagation of Christianity.

The first of these facts is the resurrection of Jesus. Had he never returned from the grave, his enemies would have considered his death as the completion of their triumph: and those who had admired his character, and had been convinced by his works that he was a teacher sent from God, must have considered his blood as only adding to the sum of all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth. His friends might have made a feeble attempt to transmit, with distinguished honour to posterity, the name of Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet mighty in word and in deed. Yet even they would have been stumbled when they recollected his pretensions and his prophecies. He had claimed a character and an authority very inconsistent with the notion of his being a victim to the malice of men; and he had foretold that after being three days, that is, according to the Jewish phraseology, a part of three days in the grave, he would rise from the dead on the third day; resting the truth of his claim upon this fact as the sign that was to be given. The resurrection of Jesus, then, is not merely an important, it is an essential

fact in the history of Christianity. If the Author of this religion did not return from the grave, he is, according to his own confession, an impostor: if he did, all who are satisfied with the evidence of this singular fact, must acknowledge, from the nature of the case, that he was the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.

It behoves you to examine with particular care the kind of evidence upon which the wisdom of God has chosen to rest a fact so essential. To the apostles, who were with Jesus when he was apprehended, who knew certainly that he was crucified, one of whom saw him on the cross, and all of whom were permitted to converse with him after he was risen, his resurrection was as much an object of sense, at least it was an inference as clearly deducible from what they did see, as if they had been present when the angel rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and when Jesus came forth in the same manner as Lazarus had done a little before at his command. But this evidence of sense could not extend beyond the forty days during which Jesus remained upon earth. And the first thing that meets you, in an inquiry into the truth of the resurrection, is the number of persons to whom this evidence of sense was vouchsafed. The time is limited. But there is no necessary limitation of the number that might have seen Jesus during that time, and, as the faith of future ages must in a great measure rest upon their testimony, it is natural to consider whether there be any thing in the particular number to which this evidence of sense was confined, that serves to render the fact incredible.

The number is much greater than will appear at first sight to a careless reader of the Gospels. The soldiers, the women, and the disciples only are mentioned there. But you will find it said, that Jesus went before his disciples into Galilee, where he had appointed them to meet him; and one of the appearances narrated by John is said to have been at the sea of Tiberias, which lay in Galilee. Now Galilee was the country where our Lord had spent the greatest part of his life, where his person was perfectly well known, where his mother's relations and the families of the apostles resided. His going to Galilee therefore, after his resurrection, was giving to a number of persons

deeply interested in the fact, an opportunity of being convinced by their own senses that the Lord was risen indeed, and thus crowned those evidences of his divine mission which they had derived from their former acquaintance with him. Accordingly Paul says, that our Lord "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," which must have happened in Galilee, for the number of disciples in Jerusalem after the ascension was but "an hundred and twenty." The testimony of this multitude of witnesses in Galilee was sufficient to diffuse through their neighbours and contemporaries a conviction of the fact which they saw.

But, it has been asked, why did Jesus retire to a remote province, and show himself at Jerusalem only to a few witnesses? Why did he not appear openly in the temple, in the synagogue, in the streets of the holy city, as he was accustomed to do before his death, and overpower the incredulity of the Jews by an ocular demonstration of his divine power? It is admitted that he did not show himself to all the people. But the objection arising from this supposed deficiency in the evidence, has been completely answered by some of the best commentators upon the New Testament, and by writers in the deistical controversy. The heads of the answers are these. The Jewish nation, who had resisted all the evidences of our Lord's divine mission which were exhibited before their eyes during his ministry, were not entitled to expect that any further means should be employed by heaven for their conviction. The probability is, that the same narrow views and evil passions which had produced their unbelief while he lived, would have rendered his appearance in their city after his death ineffectual. Our Lord, who foresaw this inefficacy, seems to suggest it as the reason of his conduct in this matter, when he concludes one of his parables with saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." After our Lord spake these words, the experiment was made in the case of Lazarus. Many of the neighbours of Mary might know certainly that her brother had been raised by the power of Jesus. Yet some of them who had seen all the things that were done, went and told the Pharisees; and the Pharisees, upon the report of this miracle,

took counsel to put Jesus to death. It was not meet that his own resurrection should give occasion to similar plots again to take away his life. To all this it is to be added in the last place, that, whatever reception Jesus had met with in Jerusalem, the evidence for Christianity might have been injured by his appearing there after his resurrection. Had the Jews continued to reject and persecute him, the united testimony of the nation against the resurrection might have been represented as sufficient to outweigh the positive testimony of the apostles. Had they received him as their Messiah after he was risen, the Christian religion might have been represented as a state-trick devised by able men for the glory of the nation, which met with opposition at first, but to the faith of which a well-concerted story of the death and resurrection of its author did at last subdue the minds of the people. From this specimen of the answers which may be made to the objection, it appears that God tries the honesty of our hearts by the methods which he employs to enlighten our reason, that the evidence of religion was not intended to overpower those whose minds are perverted, but to satisfy those who love the truth, and that, in examining any branch of that evidence, our business is not to inquire what God might have done, but to consider what he has done, and to rest on those facts which appear to our understanding to be sufficiently proven, although our imagination may figure other proofs by which they are not supported.

Having seen that the objection, suggested by the limitation of the number of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection, may easily be answered, I proceed to state the different kinds of evidence which we, in these later ages, have for the truth of this fact. They are three. The traditionary evidence arising from the universal diffusion of the belief of this fact through the Christian world—the clear testimony of the apostles recorded in their writings—and the extraordinary powers conferred upon the apostles.

The lowest degree of evidence, which we enjoy for the resurrection of Jesus, isthat kind of traditionary evidence which arises from the universal diffusion of the belief of this fact through the Christian world. It appears from the earliest Christian writers, that it was the general faith of all who named the name of Christ, that he had risen

from the dead. We are told that the first Christians, in that exultation of mind of which our familiarity with the great truths of religion makes it difficult for us to form a just conception, were accustomed to salute one another when they met, with this expression, Χριστος ανεστη: and the first day of the week, which, from the beginning of the Christian church, was called Κυριακη ἡμερα, and in all parts of the Christian world has been observed as the day upon which the followers of Jesus assemble for the exercises of devotion, is a standing unequivocal memorial of the truth of the fact which upon that day especially is remembered. It is impossible to conceive how so extraordinary a fact should have been so universally propagated, if it had not been founded in the certain uncontradicted knowledge of those who lived near the time. But, strong as this presumption may justly be held, the faith of future ages in so essential a fact required a more determinate support.

And this is found in the clear precise testimony of the apostles, those witnesses chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Jesus after he rose from the dead; a testimony transmitted to us in the authentic genuine record of discourses that were delivered before his murderers in the city where he suffered, six weeks after he rose; and of other discourses, and histories, and epistles, in which eye-witnesses declare what they had seen, and heard, and handled of the word of life. To this office Jesus separated the apostles, when he called them, as soon as he began to teach, to be always with him; and when he said to them a little before his death, "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning;" and a little before his ascension, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me to the uttermost parts of the earth." The apostles had this apprehension of the nature of their office; for when the place of Judas was to be supplied, Peter says to the disciples, "Of these men that have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." And to Paul, who was an apostle "born out of due time," Jesus appeared from heaven, that he might also be a witness of the things which he had seen.

You may mark here an uniformity in the evidence of

Christianity. The same persons, who are to us the witnesses of the signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, are witnesses also of his having risen from the dead. In both cases they do not declare opinions upon doubtful points, but they attest palpable facts, level to the apprehension of the plainest understanding: and their clear unambiguous testimony to the miracles and the resurrection of Jesus, in which they agreed with themselves and with one another till the end, is written in the same books, that we may believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God.

We are thus led back to those circumstances which were formerly stated as giving credibility in our days to the miracles of Jesus; such as the character of the apostles, the scene of danger and suffering in which their testimony was given, the fortitude with which they adhered to it, and that simplicity, that air of truth, which pervades the evangelical history, and which falsehood cannot uniformly preserve. All these circumstances are common to the record of the miracles and to the record of the resurrection. But there are some internal marks of truth in the history of the resurrection, which are peculiarly fitted to impress conviction upon all who are capable of apprehending them. I shall mention the three following. The history of the resurrection, published during the life of the witnesses of that event, relates the consternation which it excited amongst the enemies of Jesus, the awkward attempts which they made to affix the charge of imposture upon the disciples, and the currency of that report among the Jews at the time of the publication of the history. Again, the historians exhibit the prejudices of the apostles, their slowness of heart to believe, the natural manner in which their doubts were overcome, and the combination of circumstances by which a firm belief of the resurrection was established in the minds of the witnesses, and a foundation was laid for the faith of succeeding ages. There are, lastly, that apparent imperfection and inaccuracy in the several accounts of this transaction, and those seeming contradictions, which render it impossible for any person to believe that there was a collusion amongst the evangelists in framing their story, and which yet are of such a kind, that the ingenuity of

learned men, by attending to minute and delicate circumstances which escape ordinary observers, has formed out of the four narrations a consistent, probable account of the whole transaction. It is not possible for me to enlarge upon these points. But they are so essential to this most interesting article of our faith, that they deserve your closest study. And for that purpose I recommend to you the four following books, which every student of divinity ought to read. The first is Ditton on the Resurrection. One part of this book is a general view of the nature of moral evidence, and of the obligation which lies upon every reasonable being to assent to certain degrees of moral evidence; the other part is an application of this general view to the testimony upon which the resurrection of Christ is received; and is calculated to show that this testimony has all the qualifications of an evidence obligatory on the human understanding. The second book is known by the name of the Trial of the Witnesses. There are a judge, a jury, and pleaders upon both sides of the question. The arguments are summed up by the judge, and the jury are unanimous in their verdict that the apostles were not guilty of bearing false witness in their testimony of the resurrection. The form of the book, as well as the excellence of the matter, has rendered it popular; and it will be particularly useful to you by making you acquainted with the objections and the heads of the answers. The third is, Gilbert West's Observations upon the history of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which you will find both as a separate book, and also inserted in Watson's Tracts. This masterly writer lays together the several narrations, so as to form a consistent account of the whole transaction. He gives a very full view, first, of the order and the matter of that evidence which was laid before the apostles, and then of the arguments which induce us, in this remote age, to receive that evidence. His book, according to this plan, not only places in the strongest light those internal marks of credibility by which the history of the resurrection is distinguished, but also embraces most of the arguments for the truth of Christianity. The fourth is Cook's Illustration of the General Evidence of the Resurrection of Christ, a work which displays much acuteness, and a degree of novelty in the manner of stating that

evidence. Even Dr. Priestley, an author whom I frequently mention in the following parts of my course, but whose name I seldom have occasion to quote in support of any doctrine of the Christian religion, and whose creed Mr. Gibbon has well called a scanty one, has said in one of his latest publications, "The resurrection of our Saviour, being the most extraordinary of all events, the evidence of it is remarkably circumstantial, in consequence of which, there is not perhaps any fact in all ancient history so perfectly credible, according to the most established rules of evidence, as it is."*

Besides the universal tradition in the Christian church, and the written testimony of the apostles, there is yet a third ground upon which we believe the resurrection of Christ.

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;" and that witness was given in the extraordinary powers which were conferred upon the apostles before they began to execute their commission, and which continued with them always. I stated these powers formerly as the fulfilment of prophecy. But they present themselves at this place as the vouchers of the testimony of the apostles; and in this light they are uniformly stated both by our Lord and by the witnesses themselves. He said to them before his death, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me;" and "he will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me."† Again, a little before his ascension, he said, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses to me."‡ Peter, in one of his first sermons, speaking of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, says, "We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him."§ The word translated Comforter, in the first passage that I quoted, is παρακλητος, which exactly corresponds in etymology to the Latin word *advocatus*, from which comes our word advocate, a person called in to stand by another in a court of justice, to assist him in pleading his cause,

* Hist. of Early Opinions, iv. 19. † John xv. 26; xvi. 8, 9.
‡ Acts i. 8. § Acts v. 32.

and confuting his adversaries. The apostles spake before kings and governors, before the whole world, bearing witness to the resurrection of Christ. But lest they should be confounded by the subtlety, or overwhelmed by the power of their enemies, here is a divine person promised to confirm what they said, and to join with them in convincing the world of their sin in rejecting Jesus, and of his righteousness, that although he had been condemned as a malefactor, he was accounted righteous in the sight of God. His own works were the evidence, to which he always appealed in his lifetime, that God was with him; and when he left the earth, the works which he enabled his servants to perform, the same in kind with his own, were the evidence that he had returned to his Father. "Therefore," says Peter on the day of Pentecost, "being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."*

Here is another instance of that uniformity which we have often occasion to mark in the evidence of Christianity; the same divine attestation of the servants of Jesus as of himself; the same proof of his resurrection from the dead, as of the high claim which he advanced when he was alive. "The works which I do," he said, "bear witness that the Father hath sent me; and the works which I do, shall ye my apostles do also, because I go to my Father." We are thus led back to the amount of the argument from miracles, in order to perceive the nature of that confirmation which this testimony of the Spirit gives to the testimony of the apostles. If there be an almighty Ruler of the universe, who has established what we call the laws of nature, and who can suspend them at his pleasure; and if this almighty Ruler be a God of truth, who takes an interest in the happiness of his reasonable offspring, it is impossible that the apostles of Jesus could be invested with powers, the exertion of which was fitted to convince every candid observer of the truth of an imposture; and, therefore, since signs and wonders, far beyond the measure of human power are ascribed to the apostles in authentic histories published at the time, in epistles addressed by themselves to the witnesses of those signs, and in the writings of authors nearly

* Acts. ii. 33.

contemporary; since no attempt was made to disprove the facts at the time when the imposture might have been easily exposed, and since the signs were expressly wrought in confirmation of this assertion of the apostles, that their Master was risen from the dead, we are constrained by the strongest moral evidence to believe that that assertion was true.

It is impossible for words to make this argument plainer. But there are some particulars which may illustrate the economy of the divine dispensation in conferring these extraordinary powers, and the connexion which they have with the other branches of the evidence for Christianity.

The day upon which our Lord rose was the day after that Sabbath which was the passover, *i. e.* it was the first day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath being the seventh; and it was called in the Levitical law, the wave-offering. Pentecost was the πεντηκοστη ἡμερα, the 50th day from the wave-offering. It was therefore also the first day of the week, and it was a day upon which all the males of Judea were supposed to be present before the Lord in Jerusalem.* Our Lord remained forty days upon earth after his resurrection, and he probably spent the greatest part of that time in Galilee. But he was in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem upon the fortieth day, for he ascended from Mount Olivet.* The apostles, who probably would feel it to be their duty as Jews to be present at the approaching festival, were commanded by their Master not to depart from Jerusalem till they received the promise of the Father: for, said he, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Accordingly the eleven returned from the mount, where they had witnessed the ascension, to Jerusalem, and continued quietly with the disciples in prayer and supplication. We have reason to think that they did not appear in public; and we do not read of any other transaction but filling up the Apostolical College, till the day of Pentecost, the 10th day after the ascension, when, being "all with one accord in one place, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The gift of tongues was the first that was exercised, because it was suited to the occasion. Devout

* Luke xxiv. 50; Acts i. 12.

Jews and proselytes were assembled, from respect to the festival, out of all countries. To every one in his own tongue, the apostles, inspired with fortitude, another gift of the Spirit, spoke the wonderful works of God. And Peter explained the appearance which excited their wonder, to be the attestation which, in fulfilment of their own prophecies, God was now bearing to the resurrection of the Messiah, whom, after all the works that he had done in the midst of them, their rulers had crucified, but whom God had exalted. You can thus trace, in the time of conferring these powers, the wise adjustment of means to an end. You see the silence and quietness, which had been maintained after the death of Christ, abundantly compensated by the public manner in which the gospel is first preached. The apostles are directed to submit their claim to the examination of the greatest multitude that could be assembled at Jerusalem; and the report, which this multitude would carry to their own countries of so extraordinary an appearance, was employed as an instrument of preparing many different parts of the world for the preaching of the apostles, who were soon to visit them. The powers themselves are delineated in the Acts and in the Epistles. You read of the word of wisdom, *i. e.* a clear comprehensive view of the Christian scheme—the word of knowledge, probably the faculty of tracing the connexion between the Jewish and Christian dispensation—prophecy, either the applying of the prophecies in the Old Testament, or the foretelling future events—healing—the gift of tongues—the gift of interpreting tongues—and the gift of discerning spirits, *i. e.* perceiving the true character of men under the disguise which they assumed, so as to be able to detect impostors.* There is a variety in these gifts corresponding to all the possible occasions of the teachers of this new religion. Some of them, being external and visible, were the signs and pledges of those which, although invisible, were not less necessary. Some of them were disseminated through the Christian church, and the gifts of healing and of tongues were often conferred by the hands of the apostles upon believers. This abundance of miraculous gifts was proper at that time, to

* 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

demonstrate to the world the fulness of those treasures which were dispensed by the Lord Jesus, the dignity with which he had invested his apostles, and the obligation which lay upon all Christians to receive his word at their mouth. It was proper to rouse the attention of the world to a new religion, to overcome those considerations of prudence which made them unwilling to forsake the religion of their fathers, and to inspire them with steadfastness in the faith. It was proper also to remove the prejudices which the Jews entertained against the Heathen, and to satisfy those who boasted of the privileges of the law, that God had received the Gentiles. Cornelius and his kinsmen and his friends were the first uncircumcised persons to whom the Gospel was preached. They of the circumcision who believed were astonished when they saw the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them, and heard them speak with tongues. Peter considered this as his warrant to baptize them; and when he reported it afterwards to the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, they no longer blamed what he had done, but "held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

This abundance of miraculous gifts, which so many reasons rendered proper at the first appearance of Christianity, was gradually withdrawn as the occasions ceased. We have no reason to think that any but the apostles had the power of conferring such gifts upon others. We are not indeed warranted to say that miraculous gifts were never visible in any who had not received them from the hands of the apostles. But we know that in the succeeding generations they became more rare. And when we were speaking of this subject formerly, we found writers in the third, and beginning of the fourth century, acknowledging that only some vestiges of such gifts remained in their days.

If you lay together the several particulars which have been mentioned respecting the economy of these miraculous gifts, it will appear that, as from their nature, they were the unquestionable witness of the Spirit, confirming the testimony which the apostles bore to the resurrection of their Master: so, in the manner of their being conferred, every wise observer may trace the finger of God.

There is none of that waste which betrays ostentation, none of that scantiness or delay which implies a defect of power, no circumstance unworthy of the divine author of them; but the wisdom and power of God are united in the cause of the Gospel, and the same fitness and dignity, which distinguished the miracles of Jesus, are transferred to the works which his Spirit enabled his apostles to perform.

CHAP. IX.

PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

In our Lord's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, we meet with these words: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall first be preached to all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come." These words mark the space intervening between the prediction and the termination of the Jewish state, that is, a space of less than forty years, as the period within which the Gospel was to be preached to all nations. When we attended to the fulfilment of this prophecy, we found that the account given in the book of Acts, of the multitude of early converts, of the dispersion of the Christians, and of the success of Paul's labours, is confirmed by the most unexceptionable testimony. We learn from Tacitus, that in the year of our Lord 63, thirty years after his death, there was an immense multitude of Christians in Rome. From the capital of the world the communication was easy through all the parts of the Roman empire; and no country then discovered was too distant to hear the gospel. Accordingly it is generally agreed that, before the destruction of Jerusalem, Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Ethiopia on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ. And Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, being frequently visited during that period by Roman emperors or their generals, there is no improbability in what is affirmed by Christian historians, that the Gospel was preached in the capital of this island thirty years after the death of our Saviour. The last fact which Scripture contains respecting the propagation of Christianity is found in the book of the Revelation. It appears

from the epistles which John was commanded to write to the ministers of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, that there were, during the life of that apostle, seven regular Christian churches in Asia Minor. We may consider the facts hitherto mentioned as the fulfilment of that prophecy which I quoted. As to the progress of our religion, subsequent to the period marked in the prophecy, we derive no light from the books of the New Testament, because there is none of them which we certainly know to be of a later date than the destruction of Jerusalem. But there are other authentic monuments from which I shall state to you the fact; and then I shall lead you to consider the force of the argument for the truth of Christianity, which has been grounded upon that fact.

The younger Pliny, proconsul of Bithynia, writes in the end of the first century to the emperor Trajan, asking directions as to his conduct with regard to the Christians. The letter of Pliny, the 97th of the 10th book, ought to be familiar to every student of divinity. He represents that many of every age and rank were called to account for bearing the Christian name; that the contagion of that superstition had spread not only through the cities, but through the villages and fields; that the temples had been deserted, and the usual sacrifices neglected. There are extant two apologies for Christianity, written by Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, and one by Tertullian before the end of it. These apologies, which were public papers addressed to the emperor and the Roman magistrates, mention with triumph the multitude of Christians. And there is a work of Justin Martyr, entitled a dialogue with Trypho the Jew, published about the year 146, in which he thus speaks,—"There is no nation, whether of Barbarians or Greeks, whether they live in waggons or tents, amongst whom prayers are not made to the Father and Creator of all, through the name of the crucified Jesus." Both Christian and heathen writers attest the general diffusion of Christianity through the empire during the third century; and in the beginning of the fourth, Constantine, the emperor of Rome, declared himself a Christian. If we consider the emperor as acting from conviction, Christianity has reason to boast of the il-

lustrious convert. If we consider him as acting from policy, his finding it necessary to pay such a compliment to the inclinations of the Christians is the strongest testimony to their numbers. After Christianity became, by the declaration of Constantine, the established religion of the empire, it was diffused, under that character, through all the provinces. It was embraced by the barbarous nations who invaded different parts of the empire, and it received the sanction of their authority in the independent kingdoms which they founded. From them it has been handed down to the nations of modern Europe. It is at present professed throughout the most civilized and enlightened part of the world; and it has been carried in the progress of modern discoveries and conquests to remote quarters of the globe, where the arms of Rome never penetrated.

Upon these facts there has been grounded an argument for the truth of our religion. Gamaliel said in the sanhedrim, when the Gospel was first preached, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."* The counsel has not been overthrown, therefore it is of God. The argument is specious and striking, and, with proper qualifications, it is sound. But much caution is required in stating it. And as I have given you the facts without exaggeration, so it is my duty to suggest the difficulty to which the argument is exposed, and to warn you of the danger of hurting the cause which you mean to serve, by arguing loosely from the success of the Gospel.

SECTION I.

We are not warranted to consider the success of any system which calls itself a religion, as an infallible proof that it is divine. The prejudices, the ignorance, the vices, and follies of men, a particular conjuncture of circumstances, and the skilful application of human means, may procure a

* Acts v. 36, 39.

favourable reception for an imposture, and may give the belief of its divinity so firm possession of the minds of men, as to render its reputation permanent. We justly infer from the moral attributes of God that he will not invest a false prophet with extraordinary powers. But we are not warranted to infer that he will interpose in a miraculous manner to remove the delusion of those who submit their understandings to be misled by the arts of cunning men. He has given us reason, by the right use of which we may distinguish truth from falsehood. He leaves us to suffer the natural consequences of neglecting to exercise our reason; and it is presumptuous to say that there can be no fraud in a scheme, because the Almighty, for the wise purposes of his government, or in just judgment upon those who had not the love of the truth, permitted that scheme to be successful.

As the reason of the thing suggests that success is not an unequivocal proof of the divine original of any system, so the providence of God has afforded Christians a striking lesson, how careful they ought to be in qualifying the argument deduced from the propagation of Christianity. For, in the seventh century of the Christian era, there arose an individual in Arabia, who, although he be regarded by every rational inquirer as an impostor, was able to introduce a religious system, which in less than a century spread through Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Persia, which has subsisted in vigour for more than eleven hundred years, and is at this day the established religion of a portion of the world much larger than Christendom. The followers of Mahomet triumph in the extended dominion of the author of their faith. But a Christian, who understands the method of defending his religion, has no reason to be shaken by the empty boast. For thus stands the argument. When we are able to point out the human causes which have produced any event, the existence of that event is no decisive proof of a divine interposition. But when all the means that were employed appear inadequate to the end, we are obliged to have recourse to the finger of God; and the inference, which arises from our being unable to give any other account of the end, will be drawn without hesitation, if there be positive evidence that, in the accomplishment of the end, there was an exertion of divine power.

When you apply this universal rule in trying the argument which appears at first sight to be equally implied in the success of the two religions, you find the history of the one so clearly discriminated from the history of the other, that the inference, which a proper examination of circumstances enables a Christian to draw from the success of the Gospel, does in no degree belong to the disciples of Mahomet. The best guide whom you can follow in making this discrimination is Mr. White, who, availing himself of that acquaintance with eastern literature to which his inclination and his profession had conspired to direct him, has published a volume of Sermons, entitled, A Comparative View of Christianity and Mahometanism, in their history, their evidence, and their effects. There is in these sermons much valuable and uncommon information combined with great judgment, and expressed in a nervous and elevated style. They meet many of the objections of modern times, and form one of the most complete and masterly defences of the truth of Christianity. You will learn from him, better than from any other writer, the favourable circumstances to which Mahomet owed his success. And the short picture, which I am now to give you of these circumstances, is little more than an abridgment of some of Mr. White's sermons.

Born in an ignorant uncivilized country, and amidst independent tribes of idolatrous Arabs, when the Roman empire was attacked on every side by barbarians, when the Christian world was torn with dissension about inexplicable points of controversy, when the simplicity of the Gospel was corrupted, and when Christian charity was forgotten in the bitterness of mutual persecution, Mahomet, who possessed strong natural talents, saw the possibility of rising to eminence as the great reformer of religion. Having waited till his own mind was matured by meditation, and till he had established in the minds of his neighbours an opinion of his sanctity, he began at the age of forty to deliver chapters of the Koran. During the long space of twenty-three years, he had an opportunity of trying the sentiments of his countrymen. By successive communications he corrected what had proved disagreeable, and he accommodated his system so as to give the least possible offence to Jews, or Christians, or idolaters. He admitted

the divine mission of Moses and of Jesus. * He inculcated the unity of God, which is a fundamental article of the Jewish and Christian religions, and which was not denied by many of the surrounding idolaters. From the Old and New Testament he borrowed many sublime descriptions of the Deity, and much excellent morality; and all this he mixed with the childish traditions and fables of Arabia, with a toleration of many idolatrous rites, and with an indulgence of the vices of the climate. And thus the Koran is not a new system discovering the invention of its author, but an artful motley mixture, made up of the shreds of different opinions, without order or consistency, full of repetitions and absurdities, yet presenting to every one something agreeable to his prejudices, expressed in the captivating language of the country, and often adorned with the graces of poetry. To his illiterate countrymen such a work appeared marvellous. The artifice and elegance with which its discordant materials were combined so far surpassed their inexperience and rudeness, that they gave credit to the declarations of Mahomet, who said it was delivered to him by the angel Gabriel. The Koran became the standard of taste and composition to the Arabians; and the blind admiration of those who knew no rival to its excellence was easily transformed into a belief of its divinity.

In the beginning of his scheme, Mahomet met with much opposition, and he was obliged at one time to fly from Mecca to Medina. His reputation had prepared for him a favourable reception in that city. His address, his superior knowledge, and the influence of his connexions, soon gathered round him a small party, with which he began to make those predatory excursions, which have, in every age, been most agreeable to the character of the Arabs. Mahomet pretended, that as all gentle methods of reforming mankind had proved ineffectual, the Almighty had armed him with the power of the sword; and he went forth to compel men to receive the great prophet of heaven. His talents as a leader, the success of his first expeditions, and the hope of booty, increased the number of his followers. It was not long before he united into one body the tribes of Arabs who flocked around his standard; and at the time of his death he was meditating distant

conquests. The magnificent project which he had conceived and begun was executed with ability and success by the caliphs, to whom he transmitted his temporal and spiritual power. They led the Arabs to invade the neighbouring provinces, and by their victorious arms they founded, upon the religion of the Koran, an empire, which the joint influence of ambition and enthusiasm continued for ages to extend.

Mahomet, then, is not to be classed with the teachers of piety and virtue, whose success may be considered as an example of the power of truth over the mind. He ranks with those conquerors, whom the spirit of enterprise and a concurrence of circumstances have conducted from a humble station to renown and to empire. He is distinguished from them chiefly by calling in religion to his aid; and his sagacity in employing so useful an auxiliary is made manifest by the progress and the permanence of his scheme. But the means were all human; the only assistance which Mahomet pretended to receive from heaven consisted of the revelation which dictated to him the Koran, and the strength which crowned him with victory. How far a revelation was necessary for the composition of the Koran may be left to the decision of any person of taste and judgment who remembers, when he reads it, that Mahomet was in possession of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. How far the strength of heaven was necessary to give victory to Mahomet may be left to the judgment of any one who compares the spirit of the Arabs, influenced and directed by the character and the views of their leader, with the wretched condition of those whom they conquered. Yet these were the only pretences to a divine mission which Mahomet made. He declared that he had no commission to work miracles; and he appealed to no other prophecies than those which are contained in our Scriptures.

And thus, as the introduction of his scheme did not imply the exercise of supernatural powers, as no positive unequivocal evidence of his possessing such powers was ever adduced, so his success may be fully accounted for by human means. The more that an intelligent reader is conversant with the Koran, he discerns the more clearly the internal marks of imposture; and the more that he is con-

versant with the manners of the times in which Mahomet lived, and with the history of the progress of his empire, he is the less surprised at the propagation and the continuance of that imposture.

When you turn from this picture to view the history of the progress of Christianity, the striking contrast will appear to you to warrant the conclusion which the followers of Jesus are accustomed to draw from the success of his religion.

In a province of the Roman empire, after it had reached the summit of its glory, and in the Augustan age, the most enlightened period of Roman history, there appeared a Teacher delivering openly, in the temple and the synagogue, the purest morality, the most spiritual institutions of worship, and the most exalted theology, not in a systematical form, but in occasional discourses, and in the simplest language. He committed his instructions, not to writing, but to a few illiterate men who had been his companions; and the number of his disciples, after he was crucified by the voice of his countrymen, did not exceed 120. His apostles, in teaching what they had received from their Master, had to encounter an opposition which, by all human rules of judgment, was sufficient to create an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of their doctrine. They had to combat the vices of an age which, according to all the pictures that have been drawn of it, appears to have exceeded the usual measure of corruption. Yet they did not accommodate their precepts to the manners of the world, but denounced the wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men, against practices which were nearly universal, and the indulgence of passions which were esteemed innocent or laudable. They had to combat what is generally more obstinate than vice, the religious spirit of the times; for they commanded men "to turn from idols to serve the living God." That reverence for public institutions which even an unbeliever may feel, that attachment to received opinions, that fondness for ancient practices, and those prejudices of education, which always animate narrow minds, united with the influence of the priests, and of all the artists who lived by ministering to the magnificence of the temples, against the teachers of this new doctrine. The zeal of the worshippers, revived by the return

of those festivals at which the Christians refused to partake, often broke forth with fury. The Christians were considered as atheists; and it was thought that the wrath of the gods could not be better appeased than by pouring every indignity and abuse upon men who presumed to despise their worship. The wise men in that enlightened age, who rose above the superstition of their countrymen, although they joined with the Christians in thinking contemptuously of the gods, were not disposed to give any countenance to the teachers of this new system. They despised the simplicity of its form, so different from the subtleties of the schools. When at any time they condescended to listen to its doctrines, they found some of them inconsistent with their received opinions, and mortifying to the pride of reason. They confounded with the popular superstitions a doctrine which professed to enlighten the great body of the people, and they condemned the prohibition of idolatry; for it was their principle, that philosophers might dispute and doubt concerning religion as they pleased, but that it was their duty, as good citizens, to conform to the established modes of worship. Upon these grounds, Christianity was so far from being favourably received by the heathen philosophers, that it was early opposed and ridiculed by them; and they continued to write against it after the empire had become Christian.

The unbelieving Jews were the bitterest enemies of the Christian faith. They beheld with peculiar indignation the progress of a doctrine, which not only invaded the prerogative of the law of Moses, by claiming to be a divine revelation, but even professed to supersede that law, to abolish the distinctions which it had established, and to enlighten those whom it left in darkness. National pride, and the bigotry of the Jewish spirit, were alarmed. The rulers, who had crucified the Lord Jesus, continued to employ all the power left them by the Romans in persecuting his servants; and the sufferings of the first Christians arose from the envy, the jealousy, and fear of a state, which the prophecies of their Master had devoted to destruction.

It was not long before the Christians felt the indignation of the Roman emperors and magistrates. The Roman law guarded the established religion against the introduction of any new modes of worship which had not re-

ceived the sanction of public authority; and, it was a principle of Roman policy to repress private meetings as the nurseries of sedition. "Ab nullo genere," says M. Porcius Cato, in a speech preserved by Livy, "non æque summum periculum est, si cœtus, et concilia, et secretas consultationes esse sinas."* Upon this principle, the Christians, who separated themselves from the established worship, and held secret assemblies for the observance of their own rites, were considered as rebellious subjects; and when they multiplied in the empire, it was judged necessary to restrain them. Pliny, in the letter to which I referred, says to Trajan, "Secundum tua mandata ἑταιρίας esse vetueram;" and Trajan, in his answer, requires that every person who was accused of being a Christian should vindicate himself from the charge, by offering sacrifice to the gods. "Conquirendi non sunt; si deferentur et arguentur puniendi sunt; ita tamen ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsâ manifestum fecerit, id est, supplicando deis nostris, quamvis suspectus in præteritum fuerit, veniam ex pœnitentiâ impetret."

It was not always from the profligacy or cruelty of the emperors that the sufferings of the Christians flowed. Some of the best princes who ever filled the Roman throne, men who were an ornament to human nature, and whose administration was a blessing to their subjects, felt themselves bound, by respect for the established religion and care of the public peace, to execute the laws against this new society, the principles of whose union appeared formidable, because they were not understood. Accordingly, ecclesiastical historians have numbered ten persecutions before the conversion of Constantine; and an innumerable company of martyrs are said to have sealed their testimony with their blood, and to have exhibited amidst the most cruel sufferings, a fortitude, resignation, and forgiveness, which not only demonstrated their firm conviction of the truths which they attested, but conveyed to every impartial spectator an impression that these men were assisted by a divine power which raised them above the weakness of humanity. Voltaire, Gibbon, and other enemies of Christianity, aware of the force of that argu-

* Liv. xxxiv.

ment which arises from the multitude of the Christian martyrs, and from the spirit with which they endured the severity of their sufferings, have insinuated that there is much exaggeration in the accounts of this matter; that the generous spirit of Roman policy rendered it impossible that there should be an imperial edict enjoining a general persecution; that although the people might be incensed against the obstinacy and sullenness of the Christians, the magistrates, in their different provinces, were their protectors; that there was no wanton barbarity in the manner of their sufferings; and that none lost their lives but such as, by provoking a death in which they gloried, put it out of the power of the magistrates to save them.

It is natural for a friend to humanity and an admirer of Roman manners, to wish that this apology were true; and it is not unlikely that the vanity of Christian historians, indignation against their persecutors, and the habits of rhetorical declamation, have swelled, in their descriptions, the numbers of the martyrs. It is most likely that the mob were more furious than the magistrates; that those who were entrusted with the execution of the Roman laws would observe the spirit of them in the mode of trying persons accused of Christianity; and that the governors of provinces might, upon several occasions, restrain the eagerness with which the Christians were sought after, and the brutality and iniquity with which they were treated. But after all these allowances, any person who studies the history of the Christian church will perceive that there is much false colouring in the apology which has been made for the Roman magistrates; and we can produce incontestible evidence, the concurring testimony of Christian and heathen writers, that, upon the principles which have been explained, Christianity was publicly discouraged in all parts of the Roman empire; and that, although favourable circumstances procured some intervals of respite, there were many seasons when this religion was persecuted by order of the emperors—when the Christians were liable to imprisonment and confiscation of their estates—and when death, in some of its most terrifying forms, was inflicted upon those who, being brought before the tribunals, refused to abjure the name of Christ.

Such was the complicated opposition which the apostles

of Jesus had to encounter. Yet the measure of their success was such as I have stated. Without the aid of power, or wealth, or popular prejudices; without accommodation to reigning vices and opinions; without drawing the sword or fomenting sedition, or encouraging the admiration of their followers to confer upon them any earthly honours—but by humble, peaceable, laborious teaching, they diffused through a great part of the Roman empire the knowledge of a new doctrine; they turned many from the idols which they had worshipped, and from the enormities which they had practised, to serve the living God; and this spiritual system advanced under every discouragement, till the conversion, or the policy of Constantine rendered it the established religion of the Roman empire. All speculations concerning the contagion of example, the zeal that is kindled by persecution, the power of vanity, and the love of the marvellous, are visionary, when you apply them to account for the change which Christianity made during the three first centuries. That multitudes in every country, and of every age and rank, should forsake the religion in which they had been educated, and embrace one which was much stricter, and which brought no worldly advantage, but exposed them to the heaviest afflictions; that they should be thus converted by the preaching of mean men, and that their conversion should appear in the reformation of their lives as well as in the alteration of their worship, is a phenomenon of which we require some cause, whose influence does not depend upon refined speculations, but is real and permanent; and not being able to find any such cause in the human means that were employed, we are led by the principles of our nature to acknowledge the interposition of the Almighty.

But this is the very conclusion to which we were formerly conducted. It is said in their books that God bare witness to the apostles by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. And there is as clear historical evidence as the nature of the case admits of, that this assertion is true. The change, then, which we have been contemplating, is no longer unaccountable. Miracles wrought by the first teachers of Christianity were sufficient to rouse the attention of the world even in the most superstitious age, and the argument employed in

them was so plain as to be level to every understanding, and so powerful, that we are not surprised at its overcoming, in the breasts of those who beheld them, all considerations of prudence and expediency. The eye-witnesses of the miracles, yielding to the demonstrations of the Spirit, gave glory to God by receiving his servants; and when the signs done by the hands of the apostles were transmitted to succeeding ages, attested by an innumerable cloud of witnesses, the certain knowledge that they had been wrought produced in the minds of numbers a full conviction, that the religion of Jesus was introduced into the world by the mighty power of God.

Thus, then, stands the argument arising from the propagation of Christianity. The human means appear wholly inadequate to the effect. But there is positive evidence of a divine interposition; and if that be admitted, the effect may easily be explained. The two parts of the argument illustrate one another. The miracles, which we receive upon a strong concurring testimony, enable us to assign the cause of the propagation of Christianity; and the knowledge of that propagation, which we derive from history, reflects additional light and credibility upon the miracles. The discrimination between the success of Mahomet and the establishment of Christianity is so clear and striking, that we may with perfect fairness apply the reasoning of Gamaliel to the latter, although we do not admit that it has any force when applied to the former.

These are the principles upon which you may safely argue from the success of the gospel that it is of divine origin. But although the argument, when thus stated, approves itself to every candid mind as sound and conclusive, there are still several difficulties respecting the propagation of Christianity.

SECTION II.

I MENTION, first, an objection which a celebrated part of of the writings of Mr. Gibbon has suggested to the account given in the preceding Section. The 15th chapter in his first volume professes to be a candid, but rational

inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity. "Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling Providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart and the general circumstances of mankind as instruments to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church."

The soundest divine might have used this language. We acknowledge that the providence of God condescends to employ various instruments to execute his purpose; and therefore, while we affirm that the manifestation of the power of God was the great mean of overcoming those prejudices, which prevented the easy admission of truth and reason into the minds of the first hearers of the gospel, we admit that there were also means prepared by the providence of God to facilitate the progress of this religion. But it happens that Mr. Gibbon is doing the office of an enemy, while he speaks the language of a friend. His object is to show, that the joint operation of the five secondary causes, which he enumerates, is sufficient to account for the propagation of Christianity; and the influence which the whole chapter tends to convey to the mind of the reader, although it be nowhere expressed, is this, that there is not any occasion for having recourse, in this matter, to the ruling providence of God. The five secondary causes enumerated by Mr. Gibbon are these, 1. "The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses." 2. "The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth." 3. "The miraculous powers of the primitive church." 4. "The virtues of

the primitive Christians." 5. "The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman Empire."

Mr. Gibbon's illustration of these five causes is not a logical discussion of their influence upon the propagation of Christianity, such as might have been expected from his manly understanding. But it is filled with digressions, which, although they often detract from the influence of the causes, serve a purpose more interesting to the author than the illustration of that influence, by presenting a degrading view of the religion which these causes are said to promote. It is filled with indirect and sarcastic insinuations, with partial representations of facts and arguments, and with very strained uses of quotations and authorities. I consider the fifteenth chapter of Mr. Gibbon's history as the most uncandid attack which has been made upon Christianity in modern times. The eminent abilities, the brilliant style, and the high reputation of the author, render it particularly dangerous to those whose information is not extensive: and therefore I recommend to you—not to abstain from reading it. Such a recommendation would imply some distrust of the cause which Mr. Gibbon has attacked, and a compliance with it would be very unbecoming an inquirer after truth. But I recommend to you to read along with this chapter some of the answers that have been made to it. I know no book that has been so completely answered. The author, indeed, continues to discover the same virulence against Christianity in the subsequent volumes of his work, upon subjects of less importance than the causes of its propagation, and where the indecent controversies amongst Christians give him the appearance of a triumph in the eyes of those who confound true religion with the corruptions of it. But any person who has examined the fifteenth chapter with due care, and with a sufficient measure of information, must, I think, entertain such an opinion of the inveteracy of Mr. Gibbon's prejudices against Christianity, and of the arts which those prejudices have made him stoop to employ, as may fortify his mind against any inclination to commit himself to a guide so unsafe in every thing which concerns religion.

When you attend to the nature of the five secondary causes, you are at a loss to conceive how they come to be ranked in the place which Mr. Gibbon assigns them. If by the intolerant and inflexible zeal of the first Christians be meant their ardour and activity in promoting a religion which they believed to be divine, we readily admit that the labours of the apostles and their successors were an instrument by which God spread the knowledge of the Gospel. But this cause is so far from accounting for the conviction which the first teachers themselves had of the facts which they attested, that their ardour and activity are incredible, unless they proceeded from this conviction; and the kind of inflexibility and intolerance of the idolatry and the vices of the world, which was necessarily connected with their conviction of the great facts of Christianity, was more likely to deter than to invite men to embrace it. If by the doctrine of a future life be meant the hope of life eternal, which is held forth with assurance in the gospel to the penitent, this is so essential a branch of the excellence of the doctrine, that it cannot, with any propriety, be called a secondary cause; and those adventitious circumstances which Mr. Gibbon represents as connected with this hope, he means the speedy dissolution of the world, and the reign of Christ with his saints upon earth for a thousand years, commonly called the Millennium, appear to every rational inquirer to have no foundation in Scripture, and never to have formed any part of the teaching of the apostles. If by the miraculous powers of the primitive church be meant the demonstration of the Spirit, which accompanied the first preaching of the Gospel in the signs and wonders done by the hands of the apostles, this is manifestly a part of the ruling providence of its great Master. It is not denied that the miracles, which rest upon unexceptionable historical evidence, were succeeded by many pretensions to miraculous powers after this gift of the Spirit was withdrawn. But it is not easy to conceive how these pretensions obtained any credit in the Christian church, unless it was certainly known that many real miracles had been wrought; and it is obvious that the multitude of delusions which were practised tended to discredit the Gospel in the eye of every rational inquirer, and, instead of promoting the success of the new religion,

was most likely to confound it with those Pagan fables which it commanded men to forsake. The virtues of the primitive Christians were exhibited in circumstances so trying, that they recommended the new religion most powerfully to the world. But these virtues, which were the native expression of faith in the Gospel, and the fruit of the Spirit, must be resolved into the excellence of the doctrine. Mr. Gibbon, indeed, has drawn under this head a picture of the manners of the primitive Christians, which holds them up to the ridicule and censure, not to the admiration, of the world. The colouring of this picture has been discovered to be, in many places, false and extravagant: and this glaring inconsistency strikes every person who attends to it, that an author who assigns the virtues of the primitive Christians as a cause of the propagation of Christianity, chooses to degrade that religion by such a representation of these virtues, as, if it were true, would satisfy every reader that they had no influence in producing the effect which he ascribes to them.

In stating the last cause, there is an obvious inaccuracy, which Mr. Gibbon would not have been guilty of upon another subject. He is professing to account for the *rapid* growth of the Christian church. His fifth cause is the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which *gradually* formed an independent state; and his account of the manner of its formation extends through the three first centuries of the Christian era. It matters not to the subject upon which it is introduced, whether the account be just or false; for it is manifest that the *rapid* growth of the Christian church in the first and second centuries cannot be ascribed to the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which was not completed till after the third century.

You will perceive by the short specimen which I have given, that the danger of Mr. Gibbon's book does not arise from his having discovered five secondary causes of the propagation of Christianity, to which the world had not formerly attended. It arises from the manner in which he has illustrated them: and the only way to obviate the danger is to canvass his illustration very closely. There is very complete assistance provided for you in this exercise.

Mr. White has touched upon Mr. Gibbon's five causes

shortly, but ably, in his Comparative View of Mahometanism and Christianity. Bishop Watson, in his Apology for Christianity, has given, with much animation, and without any personal abuse, a concise clear argument upon every one of the five causes, which appears to me to show, in the most satisfactory manner, that they do not answer the purpose for which they are introduced, and that it is still necessary to have recourse to the ruling providence of the great Author of Christianity in order to account for its propagation. After Bishop Watson's Apology was published, an answer was made to this 15th chapter, by Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, entitled, An Inquiry into the secondary causes which Mr. Gibbon assigns for the rapid growth of Christianity. Sir David was peculiarly fitted for such an inquiry. He had an acute distinguishing mind, enriched with a very uncommon measure of theological reading, and capable of the most patient minute investigation. He was a zealous friend of Christianity. And he has applied his talents with great success in hunting out every misrepresentation and contradiction into which Mr. Gibbon was betrayed by his favourite object. There is not so much general reasoning in the Inquiry as in the Apology. But Lord Hailes has sifted the 15th chapter thoroughly. He treats his antagonist with decency, and yet he triumphs over him in so many instances, and brings conviction home to the reader in so pointed a manner, that he is warranted to draw the conclusion which I shall give you in the moderate terms that he has chosen to employ. "Mr. Gibbon's first proposition is, that Christianity became victorious over the established religions of the earth, by its very doctrine, and by the ruling providence of its great Author; and his last, of a like import, is, that Christianity is the truth. Between his first and his last propositions there are, no doubt, many dissertations, digressions, inferences, and hints, not altogether consistent with his avowed principles. But much allowance ought to be made for that love of novelty which seduces men of genius to think and speak rashly; and for that easiness of belief, which inclines us to rely on the quotations and commentaries of confident persons, without examining the authors of whom they speak. From a review of all that he has said, it appears that the things which Mr. Gibbon

considered as secondary or human causes, efficaciously promoting the Christian religion, either tended to retard its progress, or were the manifest operations of the wisdom and power of God."

SECTION III.

As Mr. Gibbon dwells upon secondary causes, it occurs in this place to mention the rank and character of those who were converted to Christianity in early times. It is obvious to observe, that although the condition and circumstances of the first teachers had been ever so mean, if by any accident their doctrine had been instantly adopted by men of superior knowledge or of commanding influence, there might have been, in this way, created a secondary cause, sufficient, in some measure, to account for the propagation of Christianity. But the fact long continued to correspond to the description given by the apostle Paul, not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called. God employed the foolish to confound the wise, and those who were despised to confound those who were highly esteemed, that no flesh might glory in his presence, and that the excellency of the power might appear to be of him.* Yet even here a bound was set by the wisdom of God. Had Christianity been embraced in early times only by the ignorant vulgar, it might have been degraded in the eyes of succeeding ages; and the universal indifference or unbelief of those, whose understandings had received any degree of culture and enlargement, might have conveyed to careless observers an impression that this new religion was an irrational, mean superstition. To obviate this objection, even the Scriptures mention the names of many persons of superior rank who embraced Christianity at its first publication: and we know that, during the two first centuries, men completely versed in all the learning of the times left the schools of the philosophers, and employed their talents and their knowledge in explaining and defending the doctrines of Christ. Qua-

* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28; 2 Cor. iv. 7.

dratus and Aristides were Athenian philosophers, who flourished in the very beginning of the second century, and who continued to wear the dress of philosophers after they became Christians. Their apologies for Christianity are quoted by very ancient historians; but the quotations made from them are the only parts of them now extant. We still have several works of Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century. In his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, he gives an account of the time and attention which he had bestowed upon the study of Platonism, and the admiration in which he once held that doctrine. But now, he says, having been acquainted with the prophets and those men who were the friends of Jesus, I have found that this is the only safe and useful philosophy. And thus I have become a philosopher indeed. *Ταυτην μονον ευρισκον φιλοσοφιαν ασφαλη τε και συμφορον.*

There was one early convert to Christianity, whose attainments and whose character may well be considered as constituting a most powerful secondary cause in its propagation. I mean the apostle Paul, a learned Pharisee, bred at the feet of Gamaliel, a man of an ardent elevated mind, and of a strong well-cultivated understanding, who laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, with indefatigable zeal, and with peculiar advantages. But it is remarkable that this man, in preaching the Gospel, did not avail himself of all the arts which he had learned to employ. His knowledge of the law was used not to support, but to overturn the system in which he had been bred. There is not in his writings the most distant approach to the forms of Grecian or Asiatic eloquence; and there are a freedom and a severity in his reproofs, very different from the courtly manner which his education might have formed. His conversion is in itself an illustrious argument of the truth of Christianity. You will find the force of this argument well stated in a treatise of the first Lord Lyttelton, entitled, Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul; one of those classical essays which every student of divinity should read. The elegant and amiable writer, whose name is dear to every man of taste and virtue, demonstrates the following points with a beautiful persuasive simplicity. 1. The supposition, either of enthusiasm or of imposture, is insufficient to account for the conversion of

this apostle; 2. The character of his mind, and the history of his life, conspire in confirming the narration so often repeated in the book of Acts; 3. That narration involves in it the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, the great fact which the apostles witnessed; 4. Paul had had no opportunity of holding any previous concert with the other apostles, but was completely separated from them; 5. His situation gave him the most perfect access to know whether there was truth in the report published by them, as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus; and therefore his concurrence with the other apostles, in publishing that report, and preaching the doctrine founded upon it, is an accession of new evidence after the first promulgation of Christianity. The force of this new evidence will always remain with those who acknowledge the books of the New Testament to be authentic. And, for the benefit of the Christians who lived before the books were published, it was wisely contrived that the new evidence should arise out of the history of that man whose labours contributed most largely to the conversion of the world, so that, in the very person from whom they received their faith, they had a demonstration of its being divine.

And thus you observe, that, while the humble station of the rest of the apostles necessarily leads us to a divine interposition, as the only mean of qualifying such men for being the instructors of the world, the condition and education of the apostle Paul, which furnished a secondary cause that was useful in the propagation of Christianity, do, at the same time, render his conversion such an argument for the truth of that religion, as is much more than sufficient to counterbalance all the advantages which it could possibly derive from his knowledge and his talents. All this you will find illustrated in a very full life of St. Paul, which Dr. Macknight has prefixed to his commentary on the epistles.

SECTION IV.

I HAVE stated the qualifications which are necessary in order to render the argument arising from the propagation

of Christianity sound and conclusive; I have suggested the manner of obviating the objections contained in Mr. Gibbon's account of the secondary causes which promoted the rapid growth of the Christian church; and I have marked the argument implied in the conversion of the apostle Paul.

All that I have hitherto said respects the means employed in propagating the Gospel. But there is another set of objections that will often meet you respecting the measure of the effect which these means have produced. "If the Gospel was really introduced by the mighty power of God, why was it not published much earlier? It is as easy for the Almighty to exert his power at one time as at another, yet the world was four thousand years old before the Gospel appeared. Why is this beneficent religion diffused through so small a portion of the globe? It has been said that if our earth be divided into thirty equal parts, Paganism is established in nineteen of those parts, Mahometanism in six, and Christianity only in five. Why have the evil passions of men been permitted to mingle themselves with the work of God? Why has the sword of the persecutor been called in to aid the counsel of heaven? Why does the Gospel now spread so slowly, that the triumphs of this religion seem to have ceased not many centuries after they began? Why has a system, in support of which the Ruler of the universe condescended to make bare his holy arm, degenerated, throughout a great part of the Christian world, into a corrupt form, very far removed from its original simplicity? And why is its influence over the hearts and lives of men so inconsiderable, even in those countries where the truth is taught as it is in Christ Jesus? This partiality, and delay, and imperfection in the propagation of the Gospel resemble very much the work of man, whose limited operations correspond to the scantiness of his power. But all this is very unlike the word of the Almighty, which runneth swiftly throughout the whole earth, to execute all the extent of the gracious purpose formed by the Universal Father of mankind."

I have stated these objections in one view with all their force. You will find them not only urged seriously in the

works of deistical writers, but thrown out lightly and scoffingly in conversation, so that it behoves you very much to be well apprized of the manner of answering them. It is impossible for me to enter into any detail upon this subject; but I shall suggest to you, in the six following propositions, the heads of answers to all objections of this kind, leaving them to be enlarged and applied by your own reading.

1. Observe that these questions, were they much more pointed and unanswerable than they are, could not have the effect to overturn historical evidence. If there be positive satisfying testimony that the divine power was exerted in support of Christianity at its first promulgation, our being unable to account for the particular measure of the effect which that exertion has produced does not, by any clear connexion of premises with a conclusion, invalidate the testimony, but only discovers our ignorance of the ways of God; and this is an ignorance which we feel upon every other subject, which, in judging of the works of nature, we never admit as an argument against matter of fact, and which any person, who has just impressions of the limited powers of man, and the immense extent of the divine counsels, will not consider as of weight when applied to the evidences of religion.

2. Observe that all the questions imply an expectation that God will bestow the same religious advantages upon the children of men in every age and country. But, as no person, who understands the terms which he uses, will say that God is bound in justice to distribute his favours equally to all his creatures, so no person who attends to the course of Divine Providence will be led to draw any such expectation as the questions imply, from the conduct of the Almighty in other matters. Recollect the diversities of the human species, the differences amongst individuals, in vigour of constitution, in bodily accomplishments, in the powers of understanding, in temper and passions, in the opportunities of improvement, and the measure of comfort and enjoyment, or of toil and sorrow, which their situations afford. Recollect the differences amongst nations in climate, in government, in the amount of natural and political advantages, and in the whole sum of national prosperity. It is impossible for us to conceive how the

subordination of society could be maintained, if all men had the same talents; or how the course of human affairs could proceed, if every part of the globe was like every other. Being thus accustomed to behold and to admire the varieties in the natural advantages of men, we are prepared, by the analogy of the works of God, to expect like varieties in their religious advantages; and although we may not be able to trace all the reasons why the light of the Gospel was so long of appearing, or is at present so unequally distributed, yet if we bear in mind that this is but the beginning of our existence, and that every man shall, in the end, be dealt with according to that which had been given him, we shall not for a moment annex the idea of injustice to this part of the Divine conduct.

3. Observe that these questions imply an expectation that, while human works admit of preparation, the work of God will, in every case, be done instantly. But it is manifest that this expectation also is contradicted by the whole course of nature. For although God may, by a word of his mouth, do all his pleasure, yet he generally chooses, for wise reasons, some of which we are often able to trace, to employ means; and to allow such a gradual operation of those means, as admits of a progress, in which one thing paves the way for another, and gives notice of its approach. In all that process by which food for man and beast is brought out of the ground—in the opening of the human mind from infancy to manhood—and in those natural changes which affect the bowels or the surface of the earth, we profit very much by marking the slow advances of nature to its end; and therefore we need not be surprised to find the steps of Divine Providence in the publication of the Gospel very different from the haste, which, in our imagination, appears desirable. As there is a time of maturity in natural productions to which all the preparation has tended, so the Gospel appeared at that season which is styled in Scripture the fulness of time, and which is found, upon a close attention to circumstances, to have been the fittest for such a revelation. There is an excellent sermon upon this subject by Principal Robertson, which you will find in the "Scots Preacher," distinguished by that soundness of thought, and that compass of historical information, which his other writings may lead you to expect. The

same subject will often meet you in the books that you read upon the deistical controversy; and when you attend to the complete illustration which it has received from the writings of many learned men, you will be satisfied that, as the need of an extraordinary revelation was at that time become manifest, so the improvements of science, and the political state of the world, conspired to render the age in which the Gospel appeared better qualified than any preceding age for examining the evidences of a revelation, for affording many striking confirmations of its divine original, and for conveying it with ease and advantage to future ages. The preparation which produced this fulness of time had been carrying forward during 4000 years; and nearly 2000 have elapsed while Christianity has been spreading through a fifth part of the globe. But this slowness, so agreeable to the general course of nature, will not appear to you inconsistent with the wisdom or goodness of the Almighty, when you,

4. Observe that in all this there was a preparation for the universal diffusion of the Gospel. A considerable measure of religious knowledge was diffused through the world before the appearance of the Gospel; and the delay of its universal publication has perhaps already contributed, and may be so disposed in future as to contribute still more to prepare the world for receiving it. The few simple doctrines of that traditional religion which existed before the deluge, were transmitted by the longevity of the patriarchs, through very few hands for the first 1400 years of the world. Methuselah lived many years with Adam; Shem lived many years with Methuselah; and Abraham lived with Shem till he was 75, Between Adam and Abraham there were only two intermediate links; yet a chain of tradition, extending through nearly 1700 years, and embracing the creation, the fall, and the promise of a Saviour, was preserved. The calling of Abraham, although it conferred peculiar advantages upon his family, was fitted, by his character and situation, to enlighten his neighbours; and the whole history of the Jewish people —their sojourning in Egypt, the place which they were destined to inhabit, their conquests, and the captivities by which they were afterwards scattered over the face of the earth, rendered them, in an eminent degree, the lights of

the world. Bryant, in his "Mythology," and men who have applied to such investigations, have traced, with much probability, a resemblance to the Mosaic system in the religions of many of the neighbouring nations; and if we pay any attention to the force of the instances in which this resemblance has been illustrated, even although we should not give credit to all the conjectures that have been advanced, we can hardly entertain a doubt that the revelation with which the Jews were favoured was a source of instruction to other people. During the existence of this peculiar religion wise men were raised, by the providence of God, in many countries, who did not, indeed, pretend to be the messengers of heaven, but whose discoveries exposed the growing corruptions of the established systems, or whose laws imposed some restraint upon the excesses of superstition; while the progress of society, and the advancement of reason, opened the minds of men to a more perfect instruction than they had formerly been qualified to receive.

These hints suggest this enlarged view of the economy of Divine Providence, that God in no age left himself without a witness, and that the several dispensations of religion, in ancient times, both to Jews and heathens, were adapted to the circumstances of the human race, so as to lead them forward by a gradual education from times of infancy and childhood to the rational sublime system unfolded in the Gospel.

It is following out the same view, to consider the partial propagation of the Gospel as intended to prepare the world for receiving it. Many of the heathen moralists, who lived after the days of our Saviour, discover more refined notions of God, and more enlarged conceptions of the duties of man, than any of their predecessors. They profited by the Gospel, although they did not acknowledge the obligation; and they disseminated some part of its instruction, although they disdained to appear as its ministers. The Koran inculcates the unity of God, and retains a part of the Christian morality; and thus the successful accommodating religion of Mahomet may be considered as a step, by which the providence of God is to lead the nations that have embraced it from the absurdities of Paganism to the true faith. When Christianity became the established re-

ligion of the Roman empire, the other parts of the world were very far behind in civilization, and many of the countries that have been lately discovered are in the rudest state of society. But the conversion of savage tribes to a spiritual rational system is impracticable. Much time is necessary to open their understandings, to give them habits of industry and order, and to render them, in some measure, acquainted with ideas and manners more polished than their own. A long intercourse with the nations of Europe, who appear fitted by their character to be the instructors of the rest of the world, may be the mean appointed by God for removing the prejudices of idolatry and ignorance; and as the enlightened discoveries of modern times make us acquainted with the manners, the views, and the interests, as well as with the geographical situation of all the inhabitants of the globe, we may, not indeed with the precipitancy of visionary reformers, but in that gradual progress which the nature of the case requires, be the instrument of preparing them for embracing our religion; and, by the measure in which they adopt our improvements in art and science, they may become qualified to receive, through our communication, the knowledge of the true God and of his Son Christ Jesus.

5. Observe that the objection, implied in some of the questions that I stated, necessarily arises from the employment of human means in that partial propagation of the Gospel which has already taken place. Any such objection might have been effectually obviated by a continued miracle; but it remains to be inquired whether the nature of the case, or the general analogy of Divine Providence, gives any reason to expect this method of obviating the objection. Had the outstretched arm of the Almighty, which first introduced the Gospel, continued to be exerted through all succeeding ages in the propagation of it, the course of human affairs would have been unhinged, and the argument from miracles would have been weakened, because the extraordinary interposition of the Almighty would, by reason of its frequent returns, have been confounded with the ordinary course of nature. The divine original of the gift, therefore, being ascertained, the hand of Him from whom it had proceeded was wisely withdrawn, and human passions and interests were combined, by his

all-ruling Providence, to diffuse it in the measure which he had ordained. The pious zeal of many Christians in early and later times, the vanity, ambition, or avarice, which led others to promote their private ends by spreading the faith of Christ, the wide extent of the Roman empire at the time when Christianity became the established religion of the state, the subsequent dismemberment of the empire by the invasions and settlements of the barbarous nations, and the spirit of commerce which has carried the descendants of these nations to regions never visited by the Roman arms, are some of the instruments employed by the providence of God in the propagation of Christianity. It was not to be expected, that in a propagation thus committed to human means, the heavenly gift would escape all contamination from the imperfect and impure channels through which it was conveyed; and it cannot be denied that there have been many corruptions, many improper methods of converting men to Christianity, and many gross adulterations and perversions of "the faith once delivered to the saints." But you will observe in general, that although the gifts of God are liable to abuse through the imperfections and vices of men, such abuse is never considered as any argument that the gifts did not proceed from him: and with regard to the corruptions of Christianity in particular, you will observe, that so far from their creating any presumption against the evidence of our religion, there are circumstances which render them an argument for its divine original. They are foretold in the Scriptures. They arose by the neglect of the Scriptures, and they were in a great measure remedied at the Reformation, by the return of a considerable part of the Christian world to that truth which the Scriptures declare. The case stands thus. The Gospel contains a system of faith and practice, which is safely deposited in those authentic records that are received by the whole Christian world. That system was indeed deformed in its progress by the errors and passions of men, but it breaks through this cloud by its own intrinsic light. The striking manner in which the prophecy of the corruptions of Christianity has been fulfilled forms an important branch of the evidence of our religion. The discussions which they occasioned have contributed very much to render the nature

of the Gospel more perfectly understood; and the further that the Christian world departs either from those corruptions to which the Reformation applied a remedy, or from any others which the Scriptures condemn, the divinity of their religion will become the more manifest. Hence you may perceive an advantage arising from the slowness with which the Gospel was propagated for many centuries. In its rapid progress before the destruction of Jerusalem, the pure doctrine of the apostles was carried by themselves, or their immediate successors, through all the parts of the then known world. But had it spread with equal rapidity in the dark ages, all the absurdities which at that time adhered to it would have spread also; and so universal a disease could hardly have admitted of any remedy. It is now purified from a great part of the dross. The influence of the Reformation has extended even to Roman Catholic countries; and in those which are reformed, the progress of knowledge, and the application of sound criticism, are continuing to illustrate the genuine doctrines of Christ. The Gospel will thus be communicated with less adulteration to those parts of the world which are yet to receive the first notice of it: and that free intercourse, which the spirit of modern commerce is now opening between countries which formerly regarded each other with jealousy, may be the mean of extirpating the errors of Popery which were sown in remote regions by the zeal of Roman Catholic missionaries. These are pleasing views, sufficient to overpower the peevish objection suggested by the corruptions of Christianity; they lead us to consider the Almighty as making all things work together for the establishment of truth and righteousness upon earth; and they teach us to rest with assurance in the declaration of Scripture, that "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord."

6. One part of the objection only remains. It cannot be denied that there is much wickedness in Christian countries, even in those which hold the truth in its primitive simplicity. It is not unnatural for a benevolent mind, which wishes the virtue of mankind as the only sure foundation of their happiness, to regret that the Gospel does not produce a more complete reformation of the vices of the world; and if the most important blessing which a re-

velation can confer is to turn men from their iniquities, a doubt may sometimes obtrude itself even upon a candid and devout mind, how far the effect really produced is proportioned to the long preparation, and the mighty works which ushered in the Gospel. The following observations serve to remove this doubt. It is extremely difficult to attain to any precise notion of the sum of wickedness in ancient times; and there are no data upon which we can form any estimate of what would have been the measure of wickedness in the present circumstances of society, if the Gospel had not appeared. The religion of Jesus has extirpated some horrid practices of ancient times: it has refined the manners of men in war, and in several important articles of domestic intercourse; and it has produced an extension and activity of beneficence unknown in the heathen world. It imposes restraints upon those evil passions and inordinate desires, which, were it not for its influence, would be indulged by many without control; and it cherishes in the breasts of individuals those private virtues of humility, patience, and resignation, which do not receive all the honour which is due to them, because their excellence withdraws them from public observation. It addresses itself to every principle of action in the human breast with greater energy than any other system ever did: the tendency of all its parts is to render men virtuous; and if it fails in reforming the world, we cannot conceive any method of reformation consistent with the character of free agents, that is likely to prove effectual. It is according to this character that God always deals with the children of men. Religion joins its influence to reason. But it is an inconsistency in terms to say that religion should compel men to be virtuous, because compulsion destroys the essence of virtue.

These observations appear to me to be a sufficient answer to the objection against the truth of Christianity, which has been drawn from its appearing to have little influence upon the lives of Christians. But I am sensible that they are not sufficient to counteract the influence of this objection upon the minds of men. The wickedness of those who call themselves Christians is undoubtedly a reproach to our religion. It is a grief to the friends of Christianity, and the most ready sarcasm in the mouths of its

enemies. It is your business, the office for which all your studies are meant to prepare you, to diminish the influence of this objection. If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, or brighten by your example and your discourse, the graces of the disciples of Christ, you confirm the argument arising from the propagation of our religion. And the best service that you can render to that honourable cause, in support of which you profess to exert your talents, is to exhibit in your own character the genuine spirit of Christianity, and to illustrate the principles of that doctrine which is according to godliness, in such a manner as may render them, through the blessing of God, the means of improving the character of your neighbours.

The amount of the answers which I have suggested may be summed up in a few words. Any objection, arising from the measure of the effect produced by the Gospel, cannot overturn direct historical evidence of a divine interposition. We are not warranted, by the course of nature, and the conduct of divine Providence in other matters, to expect either that the Almighty will confer the same religious advantages upon all his creatures, or that he will accomplish, in a short space of time, that publication of the Gospel which formed part of his original purpose. A considerable measure of religious knowledge was diffused through the world during the preparation for the appearance of the Gospel, and the delay of its universal publication may contribute to prepare the world for receiving it. The corruptions of Christianity, which arose unavoidably from the human means employed in its propagation, could not have been obviated without a continued miracle; and the imperfect degree in which the Gospel has actually reformed the world, however much it may be a matter of regret to Christians, yet, when compared with the excellence and energy of the doctrine, is only a proof that religion was given to improve, but not to destroy, the character of reasonable agents.

Besides the books mentioned in the course of this chapter, you may read two excellent sermons of Bishop Atterbury, on the Miraculous Propagation of the Gospel.

You will derive the most enlarged views upon this, as upon every

other subject connected with Christianity, from Butler's Analogy, particularly from Part ii. chap. vi. at the beginning.

Consult also Jortin.

Law's Considerations on the Theory of Religion.

Paley's Evidences, vol. ii.

Hill's Sermons.

Shaw and Dick upon the Counsel of Gamaliel.

Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History; a book that deserves to be better known, and more generally read than it is. All the authorities and arguments, which are concisely stated by other writers, are spread out in that large work with a fulness and clearness of illustration that is very useful, and, in many places, with a degree of acuteness and ingenuity that is not commonly met with. He has dwelt very largely upon the argument for the truth of the Christian religion, which arises from the conversion of the world to Christianity. You will find, in this part of his work, a most complete elucidation of the whole argument—the history of the ten persecutions before Constantine—and a great deal of information with which it is highly proper your minds should be furnished, and which you will not easily gather from any other single treatise.

BOOK II.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURAL SYSTEM.

CHAP. I.

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

I HAVE stated the evidence upon which we receive the books of the New Testament as authentic genuine records; and I have long been employed in examining this high claim which they advance, that they contain a divine revelation. It appeared that this claim was not contradicted by the general contents of the books, but rather that there was a presumption arising from thence in its favour. We found the claim directly supported by miracles received upon clear historical evidence, by the agreement of the new dispensation with a train of prophecies contained in books that are certainly known to have existed many ages before our Saviour was born, by the striking fulfilment of his prophecies, by his resurrection from the dead, by the miraculous powers conferred upon his apostles after his ascension, and by the propagation of his religion.

But, even after this review of the principal evidences of the truth of Christianity, there remains a very interesting question, before we are prepared to enter upon a particular examination of the system of truth revealed in the books of the New Testament. The question is, whether we are to regard these books as inspired writings? It is possible, you will observe, that Christ was a divine messenger, that

the persons whom he chose as his companions during his abode upon earth were endowed by him with the power of working miracles; and yet that, in recording the history of his life, and publishing the doctrines of his religion, they were left merely to the exercise of their own recollection and understanding. Upon this supposition, the miracles of our Lord and his apostles may be received as facts established by satisfying historical evidence; and an inference may be drawn from them, that the person who performed such works, and who committed to his disciples powers similar to his own, was a teacher sent from God; and yet the writings of the apostles will be considered as human compositions, distinguished from the works of other men merely by the superior advantages which the authors had derived from the conversation of such a person as Jesus, but in no respect dictated by the Spirit of God.

This is the system of the modern Socinians, which their eagerness to get rid of some of the doctrines, that other Christians consider as clearly revealed in Scripture, has led them of late openly to avow. I quote the sentiments of Dr. Priestley from one of his latest publications, the very same in which he bears a strong testimony to the credibility of the resurrection of Jesus. "I think that the Scriptures were written without any particular inspiration, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from their circumstances, could not be mistaken with respect to the greater facts of which they were proper witnesses, but (like other men subject to prejudice) might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge, and which had no connexion with any thing that was so." "Setting aside all idea of the inspiration of the writers, I consider Matthew or Luke as simply historians, whose credit must be determined by the circumstances in which they wrote, and the nature of the facts which they relate." And again, when he is speaking of a particular doctrine, in proof of which some passages in the Epistles are generally adduced, Dr. Priestley says, "It is not from a few casual expressions in epistolary writings, which are seldom composed with so much care as books intended for the use of posterity, that we can be authorised to infer that such was the serious opinion of the

apostles. But if it had been their real opinion, it would not follow that it was true, unless the teaching of it should appear to be included in their general commission."*

And thus, according to Dr. Priestley, there is no kind of inspiration either in the Gospels or in the Epistles. He admits them to be writings of the apostles. But he maintains that the measure of regard due to any narration or assertion contained in these writings is left to be determined by the rules of criticism, by human reason judging how far that assertion or narration was included in the commission of the apostles, *i. e.* how far it is essential to the Christian religion. Different persons entertain different apprehensions concerning that which is essential to revelation. And, according to Dr. Priestley's system, every person being at liberty to deny any part of Scripture that appears to him unessential, there is no invariable standard of our religion; but the Gospel is to every one just what he pleases to make it. Accordingly Dr. Priestley, who sometimes argues very ably for the divine mission of Jesus, by availing himself of that liberty which he derives from denying the inspiration of Scripture, has successively struck out of his creed many of those articles which appear to us fundamental. And you may judge of the length to which his principles lead, when one of his followers, in a publication avowedly under his protection, has written an essay to show that our Lord was not free from sin. Many years before Dr. Priestley's writings appeared, the received notions of the inspiration of the apostles, which had been held by Christians without much examination, were acutely canvassed. Dr. Conyers Middleton, author of the Life of Cicero, has done eminent service to the protestant cause, by exposing the imposture of the Popish miracles, and by tracing, in his Letter from Rome, the heathen original of many ceremonies of the church of Rome. But his attachment to Christianity itself is very suspicious, and he is far from being a safe guide in any questions respecting the truth of our holy faith. In some of his miscellaneous tracts, he infers from the dispute between Peter and Paul at Antioch,† from the variations in the four

* History of Early Opinions, vol. iv. p. 5, 58; vol. i. p. 70.
† Gal. ii.

evangelists, and from other circumstances, that the inspiration of the apostles was only an occasional illapse, communicated to their minds at particular seasons, as the power of working miracles was given them only at those times when they had occasion to exert it; that they were not under the continual direction of an unerring Spirit: and that, on ordinary occasions, they were in the condition of ordinary men. Nearly the same opinion was held by the late Gilbert Wakefield, who was a disciple of Priestley, but who does not appear to advance so far as his master. He contends, that a plenary infallible inspiration, attending and controlling the evangelists in every conjuncture, is a doctrine not warranted by Scripture, unnecessary, and injurious to Christianity; although he admits that the illuminating Spirit of God had purified their minds and enlarged their ideas. The system of Bishop Benson, in his essay concerning inspiration, prefixed to his paraphrase of St. Paul's Epistles, is, that the whole scheme of the Gospel was communicated from heaven to the minds of the apostles, was faithfully retained in their memories, and is expounded in their writings by the use of their natural faculties. The loose notions concerning inspiration, entertained by the vulgar and by those who never thought deeply of the subject, go a great deal farther. But it is proper that you should know distinctly what is the measure and kind of inspiration which we are warranted to hold.

In order to establish your minds in the belief that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, it is necessary to begin with observing, that inspiration is not impossible. The Father of Spirits may act upon the minds of his creatures, and this action may extend to any degree which the purposes of divine wisdom require. He may superintend the minds of those who write, so as to prevent the possibility of error in their writings. This is the lowest degree of inspiration. He may enlarge their understandings, and elevate their conceptions beyond the measure of ordinary men. This is a second degree. Or he may suggest to them the thoughts which they shall express, and the words which they shall employ, so as to render them merely the vehicles of conveying his will to others. This is the highest degree of inspiration. No sound theist will deny that all these three degrees are possible; and it remains to be

inquired, what reason we have for thinking that the Almighty did act in any such manner upon the minds of the writers of the New Testament. If they were really inspired, the evidence of the fact will probably ascertain the measure of inspiration which was vouchsafed to them. The evidence consists of the following parts: The inspiration of the apostles was necessary for the purposes of their mission—It was promised by our Lord—It is claimed by themselves—The claim was admitted by their disciples—And it is not contradicted by any circumstance in their writings.

I. Inspiration of the apostles appears to have been necessary for the purposes of their mission; and, therefore, if we admit that Jesus came from God, and that he sent them forth to make disciples of all nations, we shall acknowledge that some degree of inspiration is highly probable.

The first light in which the books of the New Testament lead us to consider the apostles is, as the historians of Jesus. After having been his companions during his ministry, they came forth to bear witness of him; and as the benefit of his religion was not to be confined to the age in which he or they lived, they left in the four Gospels a record of what he did and taught. Two of the four were written by the apostles Matthew and John. Mark and Luke, whose names are prefixed to the other two, were probably of the seventy whom our Lord sent out in his lifetime; and we learn from the most ancient Christian historians, that the gospel of Mark was revised by Peter, and the gospel of Luke by Paul; and that both were afterwards approved of by John, so that all the four may be considered as transmitted to the church with the sanction of apostolical authority. Now, if you recollect the condition of the apostles, and the nature of their history, you will perceive that, even as historians, they stood in need of some measure of inspiration. Plato might feel himself at liberty to feign many things of his master Socrates, because it mattered little to the world whether the instruction that was conveyed to them proceeded from the one philosopher or from the other. But the servants of a divine teacher, who appeared as his witnesses, and professed to be the historians of his life, were bound by their office

to give a true record. And their history was an imposition upon the world, if they did not declare exactly and literally what they had seen and heard. This was an office which required not only a love of the truth, but a memory more retentive and more accurate than it was possible for persons of the character and education of the apostles to possess. To relate, at the distance of twenty years, long moral discourses, which were not originally written, and which were not attended with any striking circumstances that might imprint them upon the mind; to preserve a variety of parables, the beauty and significancy of which depended upon particular expressions; to record long and minute prophecies, where the alteration of a single phrase might have produced an inconsistency between the event and the prediction; and to give a particular detail of the intercourse which Jesus had with his friends and with his enemies; all this is a work so very much above the capacity of unlearned men, that, had they attempted to execute it by their own natural powers, they must have fallen into such absurdities and contradictions as would have betrayed them to every discerning eye. It was therefore highly expedient, and even necessary for the faith of future ages, that besides those opportunities of information which the apostles enjoyed, and that tried integrity which they possessed, their understanding and their memory should be assisted by a supernatural influence, which might prevent them from mistaking the meaning of what they had heard, which might restrain them from putting into the mouth of Jesus any words which he did not utter, or from omitting what was important, and which might thus give us perfect security, that the Gospels are as faithful a copy, as if Jesus himself had left in writing those sayings and those actions which he wished posterity to remember.

But we consider the apostles in the lowest view, when we speak of them as barely the historians of their Master. In their epistles they assume a higher character, which renders inspiration still more necessary. All the benefit which they derived from the public and the private instructions of Jesus before his death, had not so far opened their minds as to qualify them for receiving the whole counsel of God. And he, who knows what is in man, de-

clares to them the night on which he was betrayed, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now."* The purpose of many of his parables, the full meaning even of some of his plain discourses, had not been attained by them. They had marvelled when he spake to them of earthly things. But many heavenly things of his kingdom had not been told them; and they, who were destined to carry his religion to the ends of the earth, themselves needed, at the time of their receiving this commission, that some one should instruct them in the doctrine of Christ. It is true that, after his resurrection, Jesus opened their understandings, and explained to them the Scriptures, and he continued upon earth forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It appears, however, from the history which they have recorded in the book of Acts, that some further teaching was necessary for them.† Immediately before our Lord ascended, their minds being still full of the expectation of a temporal kingdom, they say unto him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? It was not till some time after they received the gift of the Holy Ghost, that they understood that the gospel had taken away the obligation to observe the ceremonies of the Mosaic law; and the action of Peter in baptizing Cornelius, a devout heathen, gave offence to some of the apostles and brethren in Judea when they first heard it.‡ Yet in their epistles we find just notions of the spiritual nature of the religion of Jesus as a kingdom of righteousness, the faithful subjects of which are to receive remission of sins, and sanctification through his blood, and just notions of the extent of this religion as a dispensation, the spiritual blessings of which are to be communicated to all in every land who receive it in faith and love. These notions appear to us to be the explication both of the ancient predictions, and of many particular expressions that occur in the discourses of our Lord. But it is manifest that they had not been acquired by the apostles during the teaching of Jesus. They are so adverse to every thing which men educated in Jewish prejudices had learned, and had hoped, that they could not be the fruit of their own reflections;

* John xv. 12. † Acts, ch. i. ‡ Acts, ch. xi.

and, therefore, they imply the teaching of that Spirit who gradually impressed them upon the mind, guiding the apostles gently, as they were able to follow him, into all the truth connected with the salvation of mankind. As inspiration was necessary to give the minds of the apostles possession of the system that is unfolded in their epistles, so many parts of that system are removed at such a distance from human discoveries, and are liable to such misapprehension, that unless we suppose a continued superintendence of the Spirit by whom it was taught, succeeding ages would not have a sufficient security that those, who were employed to deliver it, had not been guilty of gross mistakes in some most important doctrines.

Inspiration will appear still further necessary, when you recollect that the writings of the apostles contain several predictions of things to come. Paul foretells, in his epistles, the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and many other circumstances which have taken place in the history of the Christian Church; and the Revelation is a book of prophecy, of which part has been already fulfilled, while the rest, we trust, will be explained by the events which are to arise in the course of Providence. But prophecy is a kind of writing which implies the highest degree of inspiration. When predictions, like those in Scripture, are particular and complicated, and the events are so remote and so contingent as to be out of the reach of human sagacity, it is plain that the writers of the predictions do not speak according to the measure of information which they had acquired by natural means, but are merely the instruments through which the Almighty communicates, in such measure and such language as he thinks fit, that knowledge of futurity which is denied to man. And although the full meaning of their own predictions was not understood by themselves, they will be acknowledged to be true prophets, when the fulfilment comes to reflect light upon that language, which, for wise purposes, was made dark at the time of its being put into their mouth.

Thus the nature of the writings of the apostles suggests the necessity of their having been inspired. They could not be accurate historians of the life of Jesus without one degree of inspiration; nor safe expounders of his doctrine without a higher; nor prophets of distant events without

the highest. As all the three degrees are equally possible to God, it is natural to presume, from the end for which the apostles were sent, that the degree which was suited to every part of their writings was not withheld; and we find the promise of Jesus perfectly agreeable to this presumption.

II. Inspiration of the apostles was promised by our Lord. It is not unfair reasoning to adduce promises contained in the Scriptures themselves, as proofs of their divine inspiration. It were, indeed, reasoning in a circle, to bring the testimony of the Scriptures in proof of the divine mission of Jesus. But that being established by the evidence which has been stated, and the books of the New Testament having been proved to be the authentic genuine records of the persons whose names they bear, we are warranted to argue from the declarations contained in them, what is the measure of inspiration which Jesus was pleased to bestow upon his servants. He might have been a divine teacher, and they might have been his apostles, although he had bestowed none at all. But his character gives us security that they possessed all that he promised. We read in the Gospels, that Jesus "ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach."* And as this was the purpose for which they were first called, so it was the charge left them at his departure—"Go," said he, "preach the gospel to every creature; make disciples of all nations."† His constant familiar intercourse with them was intended to qualify them for the execution of this charge; and the promises made to them have a special reference to the office in which they were to be employed. When he sent them during his life to preach in the cities of Israel, he said, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."‡ And when he spake to them in his prophecy of the destruction of Jeru-

* Mark iii. 14.
† Mark xvi. 16; Matt. xxviii. 19. See original.
‡ Matt. x. 19, 20. See original.

salem, of the persecutions which they were to endure after his death, he repeats the same promise: "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."* It is admitted that the words in both these passages refer properly to that assistance, which the inexperience of the apostles was to derive from the suggestions of the Spirit, when they should be called to defend their conduct and their cause before the tribunals of the magistrates. But the fulfilment of this promise was a pledge, both to the apostles and to the world, that the measure of inspiration necessary for the more important purpose implied in their commission would not be withheld; and accordingly, when that purpose came to be unfolded to the apostles, the promise of the assistance of the Spirit was expressed in a manner which applies it to the extent of their commission. In the long affectionate discourse recorded by John, when our Lord took a solemn farewell of the disciples, after eating the last passover with them, he said, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come."† Here are all the degrees of inspiration which we found to be necessary for the apostles; the Spirit was to bring to their remembrance what they had heard—to guide them into the truth, which they were not then able to bear—and to show them things to come; and all this they were to derive, not from occasional illapses, but from the perpetual inhabitation of the Spirit. That this inspiration was vouchsafed to them, not for their own

* Luke xxi. 15.

† John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xvi. 12, 13. See original.

sakes, but in order to qualify them for the successful discharge of their office as the messengers of Christ, and the instructors of mankind, appears from several expressions of that prayer which immediately follows the discourse containing the promise of inspiration; particularly from these words, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* In conformity to this prayer, so becoming him who was not merely the friend of the apostles, but the light of the world, is that charge which he gives them immediately before his ascension, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"—the conclusion of the age that has been introduced by my appearance. I am with you alway, not by my bodily presence, for immediately after he was taken out of their sight, but I am with you by the Holy Ghost, which I am to send upon you not many days hence, and which is to abide with you for ever.†

The promise of Jesus then implies, according to the plain construction of the words, that the apostles, in executing their commission, were not to be left wholly to their natural powers, but were to be assisted by that illumination and direction of the Spirit which the nature of the commission required; and you may learn the sense which our Lord had of the importance and effect of this promise from one circumstance, that he never makes any distinction between his own words and those of his apostles, but places the doctrines and commandments which they were to deliver upon a footing with those which he had spoken; "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."‡ These words plainly imply, that Christians have no warrant to pay less regard to any thing contained in the Epistles than to that which is contained

* John xvii. 20, 21. † Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. See original.
‡ Luke x. 16.

in the Gospels; and teach us, that every doctrine and precept clearly delivered by the apostles, comes to the Christian world with the same stamp of divine authority as the words of Jesus, who spake in the name of him that sent him.

The author of our religion, having thus made the faith of the Christian world to hang upon the teaching of the apostles, gave the most signal manifestation of the fulfilment of that promise which was to qualify them for their office, by the miraculous gifts with which they were endowed on the day of Pentecost, and by the abundance of those gifts which the imposition of their hands was to diffuse through the church. One of the twelve indeed, whose labours in preaching the Gospel were the most abundant and the most extensive, was not present at this manifestation, for Paul was not called to be an apostle till after the day of Pentecost. But it is very remarkable, that the manner of his being called was expressly calculated to supply this deficiency. As he journeyed to Damascus, about noon, to bring the Christians who were there bound to Jerusalem, there shone from heaven a great light round about him. And he heard a voice, saying, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; and now I send thee to the Gentiles to open their eyes.* In reference to this manner of his being called, Paul generally inscribes his epistles with these words: Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will or by the commandment of God; and he explains very fully what he meant by the use of this expression, in the beginning of his epistle to the Galatians, where he gives an account of his conversion. "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. I neither received the Gospel of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with

* Acts xxvi. 12—18.

flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia."* All that we said of the necessity of inspiration, and of the import of the promise which Jesus made to the other apostles, receives very great confirmation from this history of Paul, who, being called to be an apostle after the ascension of Jesus, received the Gospel by immediate revelation from heaven, and was thus put upon a footing with the rest, both as to his designation, which did not proceed from the choice of man, and as to his qualifications, which were imparted not by human instruction, but by the teaching of the author of Christianity. The Lord Jesus, who appeared to him, might furnish Paul with the same advantages which the other apostles had derived from his presence on earth, and might give him the same assurance of the inhabitation of the Spirit that the promises which we have been considering had imparted to them.

III. Inspiration was claimed by the apostles, and their claim may be considered as the interpretation of the promise of their Master.

You will not find the claim to inspiration formally advanced in the Gospels. This omission has sometimes been stated by those superficial critics whose prejudices serve to account for their haste, as an objection against the existence of inspiration. But if you attend to the reason of the omission, you will perceive that it is only an instance of that delicate propriety which pervades all the New Testament. The Gospels are the record of the great facts which vouch the truth of Christianity. These facts are to be received upon the testimony of men who had been eye-witnesses of them. The foundation of Christian faith being laid in an assent to these facts, it would have been preposterous to have introduced in support of them, that superintendence of the Spirit which preserved the minds of the apostles from error. For there can be no proof of the inspiration of the apostles, unless the truth of the facts be previously admitted. The apostles, therefore, bring forward the evidence of Christianity in its natural order, when they speak in the Gospels as the companions and eye-witnesses of Jesus, claiming that credit which is due to honest men who had the best opportunities of knowing

* Gal. i. 1, 12, 15, 16, 17.

what they declared. This is the language of John.* "Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples. But these are written that ye may believe, and this is the disciple which testifieth these things." The evangelist Luke appears to speak differently in the introduction to his Gospel;† and opposite opinions have been entertained respecting the information conveyed by that introduction.

There is a difference of opinion, first, with regard to the time when Luke wrote his Gospel. It appears to some to be expressly intimated that he wrote after Matthew and Mark, because he speaks of other Gospels then in circulation; and it is generally understood that John wrote his after the other three. But the manner in which Luke speaks of these other Gospels does not seem to apply to those of Matthew and Mark. He calls them many, which implies that they were more than two, and which would confound these two canonical Gospels with imperfect accounts of our Lord's life, which we know from ancient writers were early circulated, but were rejected after the four Gospels were published. It is hardly conceivable that Luke would have alluded to the two Gospels of Matthew and Mark without distinguishing them from other very inferior productions; and therefore it is probable, that when he used this mode of expression, no accounts of our Lord's life were then in existence but those inferior productions. There appears also to very sound critics to be internal evidence that Luke wrote first. He is much more particular than the other evangelists in his report of our Lord's birth, and of the meetings with his apostles after his resurrection. They might think it unnecessary to introduce the same particulars into their Gospels after Luke. But if they wrote before him, the want of these particulars gives to their Gospels an appearance of imperfection which we cannot easily explain.

The other point suggested by this introduction, upon which there has been a difference of opinion, is, whether Luke, who was not an apostle, wrote his Gospel from personal knowledge, attained by his being a companion of Jesus, or from the information of others. Our translation certainly favours the last opinion; and it is the more ge-

* John xx. 0, 1, and xxi. 2. † Luke i. 1—4.

neral opinion, defended by very able critics. Dr. Randolph, in the first volume of his works, which contains a history of our Saviour's life, supports the first opinion, and suggests a punctuation of the verses, and an interpretation of one word, according to which that opinion may be defended. Read the second and third verses in connexion. *Καθως παρεδοσαν ἡμιν οἱ απ' αρχης αυτοπται και ὑπηρεται γενομενοι του λογου Εδοξε καμοι, παρηκολουθηκοτι ἀνωθεν πασιν ακριβως καθεξης σοι γραψαι, κρατιστε Θεοφιλε.* By *ἡμιν* is understood the Christian world, who had received information, both oral and written, from those that had been *αυτοπται και ὑπηρεται.* *Καμοι* means Luke, who proposed to follow the example of those *αυτοπται* in writing what he knew; and he describes his own knowledge by the word *παρηκολουθηκοτι*, which is more precise than the circumlocution, by which it is translated, "having had perfect understanding of all things." Perfect understanding may be derived from various sources; but *παρακολουθεω* properly means, I go along with as a companion, and derive knowledge from my own observation. And, it is remarkable, that the word is used in this very sense by the Jewish historian Josephus, who published his history not many years after Luke wrote, and who in his introduction represents himself as worthy of credit, because he had not merely inquired of those who knew, but *παρηκολουθηκοτα τοις γεγονοσιν* which he explains by this expression, *πολλων μεν αυτουργος πραξεων, πλειστων δ'αυτοπτης γενομενος.* If this interpretation is not approved of, then, according to the sense of those verses which is most commonly adopted, Luke will be understood to give in the second verse, an account of that ground upon which the knowledge of the Christian world with regard to these things rested, the reports of the *αυτοπται και ὑπηρεται*; and to state in the third verse, that he, having collected and collated these reports, and employed the most careful and minute investigation, had resolved to write an account of the life of Jesus. Here he does not claim inspiration; he does not even say that he was an eye-witness. But he says that, having like others heard the report of eye-witnesses, he had accurately examined the truth of what they said, and presented to the Christian world the fruit of his researches.

The foundation is still the same as in John's gospel, the

report of those in whose presence Jesus did and said what is recorded. To this report are added, 1. The investigation of Luke, a contemporary of the apostles, the companion of Paul in a great part of his journeyings, and honoured by him with this title, "Luke the beloved physician."* 2. The approbation of Paul, who is said by the earliest Christian writers to have revised this gospel, written by his companion, so that it came abroad with apostolical authority. 3. The universal consent of the Christian church, which, although jealous of the books that were then published, and rejecting many that claimed the sanction of the apostles, has uniformly, from the earliest times, put the Gospel of Luke upon a footing with those of Matthew and Mark; a clear demonstration that they who had access to the best information knew that it had been revised by an apostle.

As then the authors of the Gospels appear under the character of eye-witnesses, attesting what they had seen, there would have been an impropriety in their resting the evidence of the essential facts of Christianity upon inspiration. But after the respect which their character and their conduct procured to their testimony, and the visible confirmation which it received from heaven, had established the faith of a part of the world, a belief of their inspiration became necessary. They might have been credible witnesses of facts, although they had not been distinguished from other men. But they were not qualified to execute the office of apostles without being inspired. And therefore, as soon as the circumstances of the church required the execution of that office, the claim which had been conveyed to them by the promise of their Master, and which is implied in the apostolical character, appears in their writings. They instantly exercised the authority derived to them from Jesus, by planting ministers in the cities where they had preached the gospel, by setting every thing pertaining to these Christian societies in order, by controlling the exercise of those miraculous gifts which they had imparted, and by correcting the abuses which happened even in their time. But they demanded, from all who had received the faith of Christ, submission to the

* Coloss. iv. 14.

doctrines and commandments of his apostles, as the inspired messengers of heaven. "But God hath revealed it," not *them*, as our translators have supplied the accusative, revealed the wisdom of God, the dispensation of the Gospel "unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."* "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord:" *i. e.* Let no eminence of spiritual gifts be set up in opposition to the authority of the apostles, or as implying any dispensation from submitting to it.† "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."‡ Peter speaking of the epistles of Paul, says, "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you."§ And John makes the same claim of inspiration for the other apostles, as well as for himself. "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us."‖

The claim to inspiration is clearly made by the apostles in those passages, where they place their own writings upon the same footing with the books of the Old Testament; for Paul, speaking of the ἱερα γραμματα, a common expression among the Jews for their Scriptures, in which Timothy had been instructed from his childhood, says, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."¶ Peter speaking of the ancient prophets, says, "The Spirit of Christ was in them;" and "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."** And the quotations of

* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12, 13.
† 1 Cor. xiv. 37.
‡ 1 Thess. ii. 13.
§ 2 Pet. iii. 15.
‖ 1 John iv. 6.
¶ 2 Tim. iii. 16.
** 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 21.

our Lord and his apostles from the books of the Old Testament are often introduced with an expression in which their inspiration is directly asserted. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias;" "By the mouth of thy servant David thou hast said,"* &c. &c.

With this uniform testimony to that inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, which was universally believed among that people, you are to conjoin this circumstance, that Paul and Peter in different places rank their own writings with the books of the Old Testament. Paul commands that his epistles should be read in the churches, where none but those books which the Jews believed to be inspired were ever read.† He says that Christians "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" επι τω θεμελιω των αποστολων και προφητων,‡ a conjunction which would have been highly improper, if the former had not been inspired as well as the latter; and Peter charges the Christians, to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles."§ The nature of the book of Revelation led the apostle John to assert most directly his personal inspiration; for he says that "Jesus sent and signified by his angel to his servant John the things that were to come to pass;" and that the divine person, like the Son of Man, who appeared to him when he was in the spirit, commanded him to write in a book what he saw; and in one of the visions recorded in that book, Rev. xxi. 14, when the dispensation of the gospel was presented to John under the figure of a great city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, there is one part of the image that is a beautiful expression of that authority in settling the form of the Christian church, and in teaching articles of faith, which the apostles derived from their inspiration: "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."‖

These are only a few of the many passages to the same purpose which will occur to you in reading the New Tes-

* Acts. i. 16; iv. 25; xxviii. 25.
† Col. iv. 16.
‡ Ephes. ii. 20.
§ 2 Pet. iii. 2.
‖ Rev. i. 1, 10—19; xxi. 14.

tament; but it is manifest even from them, that the manner in which the apostles speak of their own writings is calculated to mislead every candid reader, unless they really wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God. So gross and daring an imposture is absolutely inconsistent not only with their whole character, but also with those gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which there is unquestionable evidence that they were possessed; and which, being the natural vouchers of the assertion made by them concerning their own writings, cannot be supposed, upon the principles of sound theism, to have been imparted for a long course of years to persons who continued during all that time asserting such a falsehood, and appealing to those gifts for the truth of what they said.

IV. The claim of the apostles derives much confirmation from the reception which it met with amongst the Christians of their days. It appears from an expression of Peter, that at the time when he wrote his second epistle, the epistles of Paul were classed with the other Scriptures, the books of the Old Testament; *i. e.* were accounted inspired writings.* It is well known to those who are versant in the early history of the church, with what care the first Christians discriminated between the apostolical writings, and the compositions of other authors, however much distinguished by their piety, and with what reverence they received those books which were known by their inscription, by the place from which they proceeded, or the manner in which they were circulated, to be the work of an apostle. In Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History you will find the most particular information upon this subject; and you will perceive that the whole history of the superstitious writings, which appeared in early times, conspires in attesting the veneration in which the authority of the apostles was held by the Christian church. We learn from Justin Martyr that, before the middle of the second century, τα απομνημονευματα των αποστολων και τα συγγραμματα των προφητων were read together in the Christian assemblies; we know that, from the earliest times, the church has submitted to the writings of the apostles as the infallible standard of faith and practice; and we find the ground

* 2 Peter, iii. 16.

of this peculiar respect expressed by the first Christian writers as well as by their successors, who speak of the writings of the apostles as θειαι γραφαι, εξ επιπνοιας αγιου πνευματος.*

V. The only point that remains to be considered is, whether there be any thing in the books themselves inconsistent with the notion of their being inspired. It is impossible for me to follow the detail into which this point runs. But I may suggest the general heads of answer to the multiplicity of objections which fall under it. Even those who acknowledge the excellence of the general system contained in the New Testament, who admit that it must have been revealed to the authors of the books by the Spirit of God, and that there are some instances in which the clearness of the predictions, and even the majesty of the style imply a peculiar illumination and direction of their minds, even such persons meet, in reading the New Testament, with difficulties which they are unable to reconcile with the notion of inspiration; and if they are stumbled, others, who wish to discredit the truth of Christianity, represent the notion of inspiration as rendered wholly indefensible, and even ridiculous, by the mistakes in small matters, the contradictions, the varieties, and littlenesses that occur in several places, and the numberless instances of a style very far removed from that which the Almighty might be conceived to assume.

When you come to examine these objections, there are two general remarks which it will be of great importance for you to carry in your minds.

1. Recollect that the objectors upon such a subject have great advantage. It is very easy to start difficulties and objections. And when the solution is to be derived from an examination of the context, and from a knowledge of ancient languages and customs, the difficulty or objection may be urged in so specious or lively a manner as to make a deep impression, before the solution can be brought forward. But the diligence, the learning, and sagacity of modern commentators have furnished every student, who wishes the Scriptures to be true, with satisfying answers to the most formidable objections against particular parts

* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 273; vol. iii. p. 230.

of them; and it is a general rule which you ought to observe in your study of the Scriptures, never to suppose, never to allow the most positive affirmation or the most pointed ridicule to persuade you, that a passage is indefensible, because that measure of information respecting antiquity and of experience in sacred criticism which you possess, does not suggest the manner in which it can be defended. You will find, upon inquiry, that apparent contradictions in the narration of the Gospels, or in the doctrine of the epistles, may be easily reconciled; that expressions, which have been represented as mean, are justified by the practice of classical writers; that the harsh sense, which single phrases seem to contain, is removed either by a more accurate translation of the original, or by the connexion in which they stand; that supposed errors in chronology or geography either disappear upon being closely examined, or arise from some of those trifling variations in the copies of the New Testament which modern criticism has investigated; that those parts of the conduct of Peter and Paul which have been censured are in no respect inconsistent with the general doctrine which they taught; and, upon the whole, that as the general matter of the New Testament could not have been known to any who were not inspired of God, and as the manner in which that matter is delivered appears, the more it is considered, to be the more fit and excellent, so there is nothing throughout all the books unworthy of that measure of inspiration of which we have hitherto spoken.

2. Observe that the objections which have been urged against particular passages of the New Testament are in general of no weight in overturning the doctrine of inspiration, unless you suppose that the authors wrote continually under the influence of what has been called the inspiration of suggestion, *i. e.* that every thought was put into their mind, and every word dictated to them by the Spirit of God. But this opinion, which is probably entertained by many well-meaning Christians, and which has been held by some able defenders of Christianity, is now generally abandoned by those who examine the subject with due care. And the following reasons will satisfy you that it has not been lightly abandoned. It is unnecessary to suppose that this highest degree of inspiration

is extended through all the parts of the New Testament, because there are many facts in the Gospels, which the apostles might know perfectly from their own observation or recollection, many expressions which would naturally occur to them, many directions and salutations in their epistles, such as were to be expected in that correspondence. It is not only unnecessary to suppose that the highest degree of inspiration was extended through all the parts of the New Testament, but the supposition is really inconsistent with many circumstances that occur there. I shall mention a few. Paul in some instances makes a distinction between the counsels which he gives in matters of indifference, upon his own judgment, and the commandments which he delivers with the authority of an apostle; "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." "This I command, yet not I, but the Lord;" a distinction for which there could have been no room, had every word been dictated by the Spirit of God.* Paul sometimes discovers a doubt, and a change of purpose as to the time of his journeyings, and other little incidents, which the highest degree of inspiration would have prevented.† It is allowed that there is a degree of imperfection and obscurity, which, in some instances, remains on the style of the sacred writers, and particularly of Paul, which we cannot easily reconcile with the highest degree of inspiration.‡ Once more, there are peculiarities of expression, and a marked manner, by which a person of taste and discernment may clearly distinguish the writings of every one, from those of every other. But had all written uniformly under the same inspiration of suggestion, there could not have been a difference of manner corresponding to the difference of character; and the expression used by all might have been expected to be the best possible.

These circumstances lead us to abandon the notion that the apostles wrote under a continual inspiration of suggestion. But they are not in the least inconsistent with that kind of inspiration which we found to be necessary for the purposes of their mission: which is commonly called an inspiration of direction, and which consists in this,

* 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10.
‡ 2 Pet. iii. 16.
† 1 Cor. xvi. 3—6, 10, 11.

that the writers of the New Testament, although allowed to exercise their own memory and understanding, as far as they could be of use; although allowed to employ their own modes of thinking and expression, as far as there was no impropriety in their being employed, were, by the superintendence of the Spirit, effectually guarded from error while they were writing, and were at all times furnished with that measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required. In his history every evangelist brings forward those discourses and facts which had made the deepest impression upon his mind; but while, from the variety which thus naturally takes place in the histories, there arises the strongest proof that there was no collusion, the recollection of every historian was so far assisted, that he gives us no false information; and by laying together the several accounts, we may attain as complete a view of the transactions recorded as the Spirit of God judged to be necessary. In the book of Acts we see the mind of the apostles gradually led, by the teaching of the Spirit, to a full apprehension of the whole counsel of God. In the Epistles they apply the knowledge which had thus been imparted to them by revelation, in ministering to the edification, the comfort or reproof of the churches which they had established; and the Spirit, who had by this time guided them into all truth, abode with them, so that from the words and commandments of the apostles we may learn the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

It hath pleased God that the Christian world should derive those treasures of divine knowledge which resided in the apostles, not by formal systematical discourses composed for the instruction of future ages, but by the short familiar incidental mention of the Christian doctrines in their epistles. This form of the doctrinal writings of the apostles has been stated as an objection to their being inspired; but by a little attention you will perceive the great advantages of their being permitted to adopt this form. Our industry is thus quickened in searching the Scriptures. The doctrines are rendered more level to the capacity of the great body of Christians, and more easily recalled to their minds by this mode of being delivered: and the books containing the doctrines are thus made to bring along with them internal marks of authen-

ticity, which could not have belonged to them had they been in another form.* The inscription of the epistle is a sure voucher, transmitted from the earliest times, that a letter had truly been sent by an apostle of Christ to a church. The character of the apostle is marked in his epistle, and the many little circumstances, which his situation or that of the church introduces into an affectionate letter, while they exhibit the natural expressions of Christian benevolence, bring a conviction, more satisfying than that which arises from any testimony, that the apostles of Jesus proceeded, in execution of the charge given them by their Master, to make disciples of all nations.

In the prophecies which the New Testament contains there must have been the inspiration of suggestion. Neither the words nor the thoughts could there come by the will of man; and the writers spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Accordingly Paul introduces his predictions with these words, The Spirit speaketh expressly; and John, we found, says in the book of Revelation, that he was commanded to write what he saw and heard.

I have explained under this second remark, that kind of inspiration, which the different branches of the evidence that has been stated appear to me clearly to establish, and which is now generally considered as all that was necessary for the purposes of the apostolical office. We do not say that every thought was put into the mind of the apostles, and every word dictated to their pen by the Spirit of God. But we say, that by the superintendence of the Spirit, they were at all times guarded from error, and were furnished upon every occasion with the measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required. Upon this view of the matter, we can easily account for all the circumstances that are commonly urged as objections against the notion of inspiration. We may even admit that the apostles were liable to err in their conduct, and were left ignorant of some things which they wished to know: and at the same time we have all that security against misrepresentations of fact, or error in doctrine, which the nature of the commission given to the apostles

* Paley's Horæ Paulinæ

and the importance of the truths declared by them render necessary for our faith. By this kind of inspiration, while a provision is made for the introduction of those internal marks of authenticity by which the Bible is distinguished above every other book in the world, there is also a perfect fulfilment of the promise given to the apostles by Jesus, a justification of the claim which their writings contain, and a rational account of that entire submission which the Christian church in every age has yielded to the authority of the apostles.

Here then is the ground upon which I rest my foot, and the point from which I desire to be considered as setting out in my Lectures upon Divinity. Jesus was a teacher sent from God. His apostles, who were commanded by him to publish his doctrine to the world, received, in fulfilment of his promise, such a measure of the visible gifts of the Spirit as attested their commission, and such a measure of internal illumination and direction, as render their writings the infallible standard of Christian truth. From hence it follows, that every thing which is clearly contained in the Gospels and Epistles, or which may be fairly deduced from the words there used, is true; and that every thing which cannot be so proved is no part of the doctrine that Christians are required to believe. After we have attained this point, sound criticism becomes the foundation of Theology. My business is not to frame a system of Divinity, but to delineate that system which the Scriptures teach, by a clear exposition of the passages in which it is taught; and to defend it, by rescuing the Scriptures from misinterpretation. We shall be very much assisted in this course by our knowledge of the Greek language. The Greek Testament will be our constant companion; and the best preparation for what you are to learn from me is to apply the knowledge, which you have acquired elsewhere, in rendering the Greek Testament familiar to your minds.

The doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture is touched upon in all the complete defences of Christianity; of most of which you have both an Index and an Abridgment in Leland's view of the Deistical Writers.

Bishop Burnet has treated it shortly in his Exposition of the 6th Article of the Church of England.

There are many excellent Sermons of English Divines upon this subject. I mention particularly Archbishop Secker's, in the third volume of his works.

And there is a rational, masterly essay upon this subject, in Bishop Benson's Paraphrase on the Epistles of Paul.

Potter's Praelectiones Theologicæ in Opera Theologica, tom. iii.

Le Clerc's Letters on Inspiration, with Lowth's Answer.

Randolph's Works.

Wakefield on Inspiration.

Middleton.

Prettyman's Elements of Christian Theology.

Watson's Apology for the Bible and for Christianity.

Preliminary Essays prefixed to Dr. Macknight's new translation of the Epistles.

Dick on the Inspiration of Scripture.

Jones's Canon of Scripture.

Doddridge.

Paley.

Marsh's Michaelis.

CHAP. II.

PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING established the divine inspiration of the books of the New Testament, we have next to learn from this infallible guide that system of doctrine which characterizes the Christian religion. It is presumptuous and childish to busy ourselves in fancying what that system ought to be. If the books containing the Gospel of Christ were really written by men under the direction of the Spirit of God, they will teach us the truth without mixture of error; and all our speculations vanish before the authoritative declarations which they bring.

I need not occupy time with delineating the great truths of natural religion. These must be the same in every true system, because they are unchangeable; and it occurred formerly, in stating the evidences of Christianity, that this revelation carries along with it one strong presumption of its divine original, by giving in the simplest language, and the plainest form, views of the nature of God, and of the duty of man, more clear, more consistent, and more exalted than are to be found in any other writings. If you were to throw out of the Scriptures all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, there would remain a complete system of natural religion, in comparison with which, even the speculations of the enlightened and virtuous sage of Athens appear low and partial. But it is of these peculiar doctrines that Christian theology consists; and I mean at present to prepare for examining them particularly, by stating them in a short connected view. I cannot propose to meet in this view the sentiments of all the different sects of Christians; for if I were to attempt to accommodate the sketch that is to be given, to the peculiar tenets of some sects, I should be obliged to leave out several doctrines which appear to me most essential to

Christianity. But although I cannot meet the sentiments of opposite sects, I do not wish to derive this short system from the discriminating tenets, or the peculiar language of any one sect: I wish to avoid the use of any terms that are not scriptural, and to present to you the form of sound words which is taught by the apostles themselves. We shall have enough of controverted opinions when we come to attend to the different facts of the system. But it seems to me proper that you should carry in your minds a general distinct conception of the subjects upon which the controversies turn, before we be entangled in that thorny path.

The foundation of the Gospel is this, that men are sinners. If you take away this proposition, the whole system is left without meaning: if you receive it in its full import, you perceive the use of the different parts, and the harmony with which they unite in producing the effect that is ascribed to the whole. The proposition is often enunciated in Scripture; but the truth of it is independent of the authority of any revelation, and must be admitted by every candid observer, whether he believes or rejects the divine mission of Jesus. Although different states of society have exhibited different forms of wickedness, authentic history does not record any in which human virtue has appeared pure. A great part of the business of every government is to interpose restraints upon the evil passions of the subjects: yet so ineffectual are those restraints, that the peace of the best constituted society is often disturbed by enormous crimes, while there are transgressions of virtue which elude the law, that indicate a deeper depravity of mind than those enormities which are punished: and even the best of the sons of men, those who by the innocence of their lives are exempted not only from the punishments, but even from the censures of human society, have the consciousness of imperfection, of failing, and demerit.

The Scriptures connect this abounding of iniquity with a transaction which took place soon after the creation of Adam. "By one man," says Paul, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; in Adam all die."*

* Rom. v. 12, 18. 1 Cor. xv. 22.

This is the commentary made by an apostle upon the third chapter of Genesis; and when we take that chapter, the commentary of Paul, and other incidental expressions in connexion, we are led by the Scriptures to consider the transgression of the first parents of the human race as altering the condition of their posterity, rendering this earth a less comfortable, and less virtuous habitation, than without that transgression it would have been, and introducing sin, with all its attendant misery, amongst a part of the rational creation who were made at first after the image of God.

Something analogous to this effect of the transgression of our first parents, may often be observed in human connexions. And we are guarded against wantonly rejecting the Scripture account of this early transaction, as incredible or inconsistent with the government of God, when we see, in numberless instances, the sins of some persons extending their baleful influence to the minds and the fortunes of others, a father corrupting the manners of his children, entailing upon them disease, disgrace, poverty and vice, and thus reducing them by his wickedness to a calamitous state, which, had they sprung from other parents, it appears to us they might have avoided.

To this it must be added, that in the present condition of the human race there are many symptoms of degradation. The combat between the higher and the lower parts of our nature, the temptations to vice which every thing around us presents, the judgments which are often executed by changes upon the face of nature, that abridgment of the comforts of life which arises from our own faults, or those of others, and the violence which is done to our feelings and our affections by the manner in which we are called out of the world; all this, and much more of the same kind, indicates a disordered state, and accords with the slight incidental openings which the Scriptures give us into that ancient transaction, to which they trace the sin and misery of mankind. The effects of this transaction continue in the world notwithstanding all the efforts of philosophy, good government, and civilization. Neither the vigilant education and rigorous discipline prescribed in some ancient states, nor the circumspection and mortification learned in some ancient schools, were able to

cleanse the heart of any one individual from every kind of defilement, or to maintain a life in all respects blameless. And, whatever remedy the progress of improvement may be conceived to have applied to the other evils which proceed from sin, there is one standing memorial of its power, which defies the wit and the strength of man. None can deliver his own soul, or the soul of his brother from death. "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die."* But death is represented in the Scriptures as the fruit of sin; and therefore the continuance of death is one of those practical lessons which the Almighty often administers, which is independent of speculation, but, being by its nature a strong confirmation of the discoveries that are made, is sufficient to teach all who receive the Scriptures, that the transaction to which they ascribe the introduction of death has not exhausted all its force.

The Gospel then proceeds upon a fact, which was not created by the revelation, but would have been true, although the Gospel had not appeared, that that part of the reasonable offspring of God who inhabit this earth are sinners, and that their efforts to extricate themselves out of this condition had proved ineffectual. But sin is repugnant to our moral feelings, and excites our abhorrence. How much more odious must it appear in the sight of Him, whom natural religion and the declarations of Scripture teach us to consider as infinitely holy! We see only a small portion of human wickedness. But all the demerit of every individual sinner, and the whole sum of iniquity committed throughout the earth, are continually present to the eyes of Him with whose nature they are most inconsistent. The sins of men are transgressions of the law given them by their Creator, an insult to his authority, a violation of the order which he had established, a diminution of the happiness which he had spread over his works. It is unknown to us what connexions there are amongst different parts of the universe. But it is manifest that no government can subsist if the laws are transgressed with impunity. It is very conceivable that the other creatures of God might be tempted to disobedience, if the transgressions of the human race received no chastisement. And there-

* Heb. ix. 27.

fore, as every temptation to disobey laws which bring peace to the obedient is really an introduction to misery, it appears most becoming the Almighty, both as the Ruler and the Father of the universe, to execute his judgments against the human race. Accordingly the Scriptures record many awful testimonies of the divine displeasure with sin; and they represent the whole world as the children of wrath, guilty before God, and under the curse, because they are the children of disobedience. It is not in the nature of repentance to avert those evils which past transgressions had deserved. But we have seen that men were unable to forsake their sins; and we cannot form a conception of any mode, consistent with the honour and the great objects of the divine government, by which a creature who continues to transgress the divine laws, can stop the course of that punishment, which is the fruit of his transgression.

In this situation, when the reasonings of nature fail, and every appearance in nature conspires to show that hope is presumptuous, the revelation of the Gospel is fitted by its peculiar character to enlighten and revive the human mind. We there learn that God, who is rich in mercy, moved by compassion for the work of his hands, for the great love wherewith he loved the world, conceived a plan for delivering the children of Adam from that sin and misery out of which they were unable to extricate themselves.* Having foreseen, before the foundation of the world, that they would yield to the temptation of an evil spirit, and abuse that liberty which forms an essential part of their nature, he comprehended in the same eternal counsel a purpose to create, and a purpose to save.† Immediately after the transgression of the first man there was some discovery of the gracious plan. At the same time that a curse is pronounced upon the ground, and death is declared to be the punishment of sin, there is an intimation of future deliverance in these words: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."‡ The promise was unfolded, and the plan gradually opened

* Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Rom. iii. 19; v. 12. Gal. iii. 10, 22. Col. iii. 5, 6, 7.

† Ephes. iii. 11.

‡ Gen. iii. 15.

through a succession of dispensations, all conspiring in their place to produce the fulness of time, when the plan was executed by the manifestation of that glorious person whom prophecy had announced. The light of nature does not give any notice of the existence of this person. But as the importance of the office which he executed renders his character most interesting to the human race, the Scriptures declare that he was with God in the beginning, that by him God made the worlds, that he was God, but that veiling his glory, although he could not divest himself of the nature of God, he was born in a miraculous manner, was made in the likeness of men, took part of flesh and blood, and dwelt with those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren.* The purpose, for which this extraordinary messenger visited the earth, was declared by the angel who announced the singular manner of his birth: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."† John his forerunner thus marked him out: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."‡ He said of himself, "I am come to call sinners to repentance; to give my life a ransom for many."§ And the charge which he gave to his apostles, and which they executed in all their discourses and writings, was this, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.‖ These expressions imply that the peculiarity of the Jewish state was concluded by the appearance of this prophet, and that the benefit of his manifestation was to extend to all nations. The same expressions imply also that the nature of that benefit was accommodated to what we have found the situation of mankind to require. In fulfilment of that character of a Saviour which he assumed, he not only taught men the will of God by precept and by example, unfolded that future state in which they are to receive according to the deeds done in the body, and enforced the practice of righteousness by every motive addressed to the understanding and the affections, but he voluntarily sub-

* John i. 1, 2, 3, 14; xvii. 5. Heb. i. 2; ii. 14. Phil. ii. 6, 7. Luke i. 26—38.

† Matth. i. 21.

‡ John i. 29.

§ Matth. ix. 13; xx. 28.

‖ Luke xxiv. 47.

mitted to the most grievous sufferings, and the most cruel death, as the method ordained in the counsel of heaven for procuring their deliverance from sin. There is no mode of expression that we can devise, which is not employed by Scripture to convey this conception, that the death of Christ was not barely a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, an example of disinterested benevolence and of heroic virtue, but a true sacrifice for sin, offered by him to God the Father, in order to avert the punishment which the sins of men deserved, and to render it consistent with the character of the Deity and the honour of the divine laws, to forgive men their trespasses. "I am the good shepherd," says Jesus; "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past."† "We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."‡ The natural conclusion which any person, whose mind is not warped by a particular system, will draw from these and numberless other expressions of the same kind, is this, that as the scheme for the deliverance of the human race originated from the love of God the Father, so it was accomplished by the instrumentality of that person, who is called in Scripture the Son of God.

As the effect of this instrumentality is clearly declared in Scripture, so it is analogous to one part of the divine procedure which we have often occasion to observe. The whole course of human affairs is carried on by alternate successions of wisdom and folly. Evils are incurred, and they are remedied. The good affections or the generosity of some are employed to retrieve the faults or the misfortunes of others: and the condescension and zeal, with which the talents of an exalted character are exerted in some cause which did not properly belong to him, are often seen to restore that order and happiness which the extravagance of vice appeared to have destroyed. The dispensation revealed in the Gospel is the same in kind with these instances, although infinitely exalted above them in magnificence and extent. We see there sin and misery

* John x. 11. † Rom. iii. 25. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

entering into the world by the transgression of one man, the effects spreading through the whole race, and the remedy brought by the generous interposition of a person who had no share in the disaster, whose power of doing good was called forth purely by compassion for the distressed, and, in opposition to all the obstacles raised by an evil spirit, was exerted with perseverance and success, in removing the deformity and disorder which he had introduced into the creation. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* "He took part of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."†

That the interposition of the Son of God was effectual in promoting the purpose for which it was made, and that his death did really overcome that evil spirit, who is styled the prince of this world,‡ was declared by his resurrection, and by the gifts which in fulfilment of his promise were sent upon his apostles after his ascension.§ This is the Scripture proof, "that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him."‖ So speaks Peter in one of his first sermons.¶ "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him," *i. e.* Our testimony of his resurrection, confirmed by the witness of the Holy Ghost, is the evidence that God hath exalted him to be a Saviour. He is now, by the appointment of God, the dispenser of those blessings which he died to purchase;** the Mediator of the new covenant, which was sealed by his blood, and which is established upon better promises,†† of the fulfilment of which we receive perfect assurance from the power that is given to him

* 1 John iii. 8.
† Heb. ii. 14, 15.
‡ John xiv. 30.
§ Rom. i. 4. Acts ii. 32, 33.
‖ Heb. vii. 25.
¶ Acts v. 30—32.
** Heb. xii. 2.
†† Heb. viii. 4; ix. 12, 15.

in heaven and in earth.* Pardon, grace, and consolation, flow from him as their proprietor, who hath acquired by his sufferings the right of distributing gifts to men.† "Being justified by his blood, we have peace with God, and access to the Father through him."‡ He is now the advocate of his people,§ who appears in the presence of God for them;‖ "who ever lives to make intercession,"¶ and by whom their prayers and services are rendered acceptable.** He directs the course of his Providence, so as to promote their welfare, not by abolishing the present consequences of sin, but by rendering them medicinal to the soul:†† and death, which is still allowed to continue as a standing memorial of the evil of sin, shall at length be destroyed by the working of his mighty power, which is able to quicken the bodies that had been mingled with the dust of the earth.‡‡ "I am," says he, "the resurrection and the life."§§ "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."‖‖ "Power is given him over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he will."¶¶ And the crown of life that shall be conferred at the last day upon those for whom it is prepared, is represented in Scripture not as a recompense which they have earned, but as the gift of God through him. "The wages of sin is death; but eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."***

In this manner the blessings, which that divine Person who interposed for the salvation of mankind is able to bestow, imply a complete deliverance from the evils of sin. "As through one man's offence, death reigned by one, so they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."†††

Hitherto we have confined our attention to the interposition of that Person, who appeared upon earth to save his people from their sins. But we are introduced in the

* Matth. xxviii. 18.
† Ephes. iv. 8.
‡ Rom. v. 1, 2, 9, 11. Eph. ii. 18.
§ 1 John ii. 1.
‖ Heb ix. 24.
¶ Rom. viii. 34.
** Rev. viii. 3, 4.
†† Rom. viii. 28.
‡‡ Phil. iii. 21.
§§ John iii. 25.
‖‖ John v. 28, 29.
¶¶ John xvii. 2.
*** Rom. vi. 23.
††† Rom. v. 17.

Gospel to the knowledge of a third Person, who concurs in the salvation of mankind; who proceedeth from the Father, who is sent by the Son as his Spirit,* whose power is spoken of in exalted terms,† to whom the highest reverence is challenged,‡ and who, in all the variety of his operations, is one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will.§ One God and Father of all is known by the works of nature: the Son of God is made known by revelation, because the world which he had made stood in need of his interposition to redeem it: and the Spirit is made known by the same revelation, because the benefits of this redemption are applied through his agency. Our knowledge in this way grows with our necessities. We learn how inadequate our faculties are to comprehend the divine nature, when we see such important discoveries superinduced upon the investigations of the most enlightened reason. And we learn also that the measures of knowledge, which the Father of Spirits sees meet to communicate, are not intended to amuse our minds with speculation, and to gratify curiosity, but are immediately connected with the grounds of our comfort and hope. They comprehend all that is necessary for us in our present circumstances. But they may be far from exhausting the subject revealed: and from the very great addition which the revelation of the Gospel has made to our knowledge, it is natural for us to infer that creatures in another situation, or we ourselves in a more advanced state of being, may see distinctly many things, which we now in vain attempt to penetrate. The mode in which the Son and the Spirit subsist, and the nature of their connexion with the Father, however much they have been the subject of human speculation, are nowhere revealed in Scripture. But the offices of these persons, being of infinite importance to us, are revealed with such hints only of their nature, as may satisfy us that they are qualified for these offices.

We have seen the office of the Son in the redemption of the world, the right which he acquired by his perfect obedience and suffering to dispense the blessings of his

* John xv. 26. † Acts iv. 31, 33. Rom. viii. 11, 26. 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. ‡ Heb. ix. 14; x. 29. § 1 Cor. xii. 4—11.

purshase. It is in the dispensation of those blessings that the office of the Spirit appears. This office commenced from the earliest times: For he spake by the mouth of all the holy prophets, who prophesied, since the world began, of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.* To his agency the miraculous conception of the Son of man is ascribed.† He descended upon Jesus at his baptism :‡ he was given to him without measure during his ministry ;§ and after his ascension he was manifested in the variety and fulness of those gifts which distinguished the first preachers of Christianity.‖ But all these branches of the office of the Spirit, so necessary for confirming the truth, and for diffusing the knowledge of the Christian religion, were only the pledges of those ordinary influences, by which the same Divine Person continues in all ages to apply the blessings which are thus revealed.

The ordinary influences of the Spirit are represented in Scripture as opposed to all those circumstances in the present condition of human nature, which indispose men for receiving such a religion as the Gospel. Thus you read, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of God; they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned."¶ But the spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to Christians, that "the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of their calling."** You read, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and cannot be subject to his law: But they that are led by the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit."†† You read of a complacency in their own righteousness, which prevents many from submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.‡‡ But the Spirit casts down every high thought which exalteth itself."§§

In all this there is nothing contrary to the reasonable nature of man. We have daily experience of the influence which one mind has over another, by presenting objects in the light best fitted to command assent and conviction, by suggesting forcible motives, by over-ruling objections, by addressing every generous principle, and exciting every

* 1 Pet. i. 11. † Luke i. 35. ‡ Luke iii. 22.
§ John iii. 34. ‖ Acts ii. 4. ¶ 1 Cor. ii. 14.
** Ephes. i. 17, 18. †† Rom. viii. 5, 7. ‡‡ Rom. x. 3.
§§ 2 Cor. x. 5.

latent spark of good affection. You sometimes see or hear of persons formed for commanding others, not by force, but by an acknowledged eminence in talents and virtues: and you often see men conducted by a skilful exposition to the clear apprehension of truths which seemed to be above their capacity, and irresistibly, yet freely, led, by well adapted persuasion, to exertions which they considered as beyond their power. All this is a very faint image indeed, but it may assist you in forming some conception of the action of the Spirit of God upon the mind of man. He who knows every spring of that heart which he formed, every method of approach, every secret wish, every reluctant thought, and whose power over mind is as entire as that which he exercises over matter, can in various ways illuminate the darkest understanding, and bend the most stubborn will, without destroying that freedom which is the essential character of the being upon whom he acts. The influence is efficacious, and the purpose of him from whom it proceeds cannot be defeated. Yet the being who is thus moved has as little feeling of constraint, acts as much from choice and deliberation, as if the views and motives had occurred to his own mind without a guide, or had been suggested to him by any of his neighbours. Hence, although this influence of the Spirit is expressed in Scripture by a new creation,* and the quickening of those who were dead,† although our Lord hath said, "Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," *i. e.* become a Christian; and again, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him,"‡ yet the persons thus created, quickened and drawn, are said to be "willing in a day of power."§ "Where the Spirit of the Lord is," says the Apostle, "there is liberty,"‖ the liberty which belongs to those whose understandings know the truth, whose affections are orderly, and who are not the servants of sin. The Gospel is styled "the perfect law of liberty."¶ A Christian is significantly called "the Lord's freeman."** And Jesus said to those

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Ephes. ii. 1. ‡ John iii. 3, 5; vi. 44.
§ Psalm cx. 3. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 17. ¶ James i. 25.
** 1 Cor. vii. 22.

who believed on him, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."*

Such is the nature of that influence, which the Scriptures represent the Spirit of God as exerting upon every true Christian. The immediate effect of that influence is called in Scripture faith; a word, which according to its etymology, πιστις, denotes a firm persuasion of truth, but which, in the Scripture sense of the word, comprehends all the sentiments and affections which naturally arise from a firm persuasion of the truth of Christianity; a cordial acquiescence in the doctrines of the Gospel, a thankful acceptance of the method of salvation from sin there offered, a reliance upon the promises of God, and a submission to his will. Although an acquaintance with the historical evidences of the truth of Christianity be the natural foundation of a persuasion of its truth, yet a person may have studied these evidences with care, and may be able to answer the objections that have been urged against them, who, at the same time, from some wrongness of mind, does not attain to the sentiments and dispositions implied under faith. The Scriptures hold forth examples of this in the enemies of our Lord during his life, who had clearer evidences of his divine mission before their eyes than we are able to attain with all our investigation, and in many of those, who, by teaching and doing wonderful works in his name, had that evidence within themselves, yet are for ever separated from him by his own declaration.† And these examples will not appear strange to any person who has bestowed a philosophical attention upon the inconsistencies in the human mind, and the small influence which deductions of the understanding often appear to have upon the heart. On the other hand, both the Scriptures and our own experience afford many examples of persons, who, with limited information and narrow powers of reasoning, yet by a tractable disposition, a love of the truth, and a fairness of mind, have attained to what the Scriptures call faith, and become the disciples of Christ indeed. To this purpose Jesus says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and

* John viii. 36. † Matt. vii. 22, 23.

prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."* And again, "Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" *i. e.* Except ye receive the truth with that freedom from prejudice, that desire of learning, and that simplicity of intention, which are all implied in the character of children, ye cannot become Christians.† In another place, our Lord says, "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God;"‡ and he explains the good soil, in which the seed fell that produced an hundred fold, by a good and honest heart, in which they keep the word, who bring forth fruit with patience."§ All these expressions imply not merely that faith is an exercise of understanding, but that a certain preparation of heart is requisite for it; and hence you will perceive that, although faith be a reasonable act proceeding upon evidence, there is room for the influence of the Spirit in disposing the mind to attend to the evidence, and to see its force, in overcoming prejudice, and carrying home the truth with power to the heart. Accordingly the Apostle Paul says expressly, that faith is "the gift of God;"‖ and this declaration is only expressing, in one sentence, the uniform doctrine of Scripture upon this subject.

Faith, which is thus produced by the influence of the Spirit of God upon the mind of man, is the character with which a participation of the blessings of the Gospel is always connected in Scripture. These blessings were acquired, and are dispensed by the Lord Jesus. But they are applied by his Spirit only to them who believe. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." We are said to be "justified by faith:" and the only direction which Paul gave to the jailor, when he cried out, "What

* Matt. xi. 25, 26. † Matt. xviii. 6. ‡ John vii. 17.
§ Luke viii. 15. ‖ Ephes. ii. 8.

must I do to be saved?" was this, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."*

Declarations of this kind abound in Scripture. But there are two mistakes which such declarations are apt to occasion; and both are so opposite to the Scripture system, that they require to be mentioned in this short account of it.

The first mistake, into which you may be led by the Scripture declarations concerning faith, is to imagine that faith is the procuring cause of our salvation; that because Christ says, "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," any person who does the work receives the blessings of the Gospel as the wages which he has earned. But such an opinion contradicts all the views which we have hitherto deduced from Scripture. For the Gospel being a salvation from sin, those who are to be saved are considered as sinners, until they partake of the salvation. The investiture with a certain character is indeed a present, and in some sense an immediate effect of the salvation, and is so inseparably connected with it, as to be the Scripture mark, that a person has "passed from death unto life." But being an effect, it cannot in the nature of things be a cause of that from which it proceeds; and therefore the Scriptures speak in perfect consistency with themselves, when they declare, "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus."† "When we were dead in sins, he quickened us together with Christ, for by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."‡ Faith is the instrument by which the Spirit of God applies to us the blessings which Christ hath acquired the right of dispensing. But there is no merit in the instrument. Since all had sinned, and come short of the glory of God, "we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" and he is "the Lord our righteousness."

The second mistake into which you may be led by the

* John iii. 16. Mark xvi. 16. Rom. x. 8, 9; v. i. Acts xvi. 30, 31.

† 2 Tim. i. 9. ‡ Ephes ii. 1, 8.

Scripture declaration concerning faith is, that faith is the only thing which is required of a Christian. If all that Paul said to the jailor was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," it seems to follow that, if he believed, it mattered not how far he disregarded every other precept of the Gospel. But the Scriptures, by all their descriptions of faith, mean to teach us that it cannot be alone. It is the principle of a divine life, by which we are united to Christ and derive from him grace and strength for the discharge of every duty. It works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. So we read in Scripture of a life of faith, of the obedience of faith, of faith being dead, because it is without works. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law."* Here then you will mark the place which good works hold in the Christian system. They are not the ground of our acceptance with God, for the whole world, according to this system, being guilty before God, we must have remained for ever excluded from his favour had good works been the condition upon which our being received into it was suspended. "Therefore," the Apostle Paul says, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God." Neither are those the good works of a Christian, which, although fit in themselves, and profitable to those who do them, and to others, are done merely upon considerations of reason, honour, and conscience, which ought to actuate the mind in every situation. But the good works required in the Gospel flow from faith, *i. e.* they are performed in the spirit of a Christian, from the motives suggested by a firm persuasion of the truth of the Gospel. Good works, therefore, are stated in Scripture as the fruits and evidences of faith, the necessary effect of the operation of the Spirit of God. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;"† and there thus appears to be the most perfect consistency between the doctrine of Paul and that of James. Paul says, that we are not justified by any thing that we can do ourselves, but freely by grace,

* Gal. v. 6; ii. 20. Acts xv. 9. 1 John v. 4. Rom. i. 5; iii. 31. James ii. 12.

† Ephes. ii. 10.

through faith in the blood of Christ. James says, Show me thy faith by thy works; faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit. And he concludes, that a man is justified not by faith only, *i. e.* by such a faith as does not produce what Paul had stated to be the constant effect of a true faith, but by that faith which by works is made perfect.

As the Gospel calls men, by motives peculiar to itself, and with an energy which no other system ever possessed, to the practice of righteousness, so it is uniformly supposed in Scripture, that the followers of Jesus are to be distinguished by the zeal and constancy with which they abound in the work of the Lord. The question of our Lord, "What do ye more than others?" and such expressions as these, "being dead to sin," "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts," "being alive unto God," "putting on the new man," "walking after the Spirit," imply an eminence and uniformity of virtues, a light which shines before men. That innocence which the laws of our country enjoin, that measure of virtue which a regard to public opinion or even the principles of natural religion require, falls very far short of the evangelical standard. It is the duty of a Christian to aspire after perfection, yet never to count that he has attained it; to forsake the vices of others, and to endeavour to excel their virtues, yet to be deeply sensible of his own imperfection, and ready to allow his brethren all the praise which they deserve; to fill up his life with the various exertions of active, diffusive, disinterested benevolence, yet to guard against the emotions of vanity, and that spirit of ostentation by which a good deed loses all its value; and to ascribe the honour of his progress in virtue, not to his natural disposition, to his own diligence or watchfulness, or to any concurrence of favourable circumstances, but to that God who called him to the knowledge of the Gospel, to that Saviour by the faith of whom he lives, and that Spirit by whose influence he is sanctified.

The Scriptures assure us that the good works which thus proceed from faith, although imperfect in degree, and mingled with many infirmities, are well pleasing in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. He, in allusion to the Jewish law, is represented as the high priest over the house

of God, who, having yielded a perfect obedience to the divine law, has no occasion to make any offering for his own sins, but appears in the presence of God for his people.* And the good works which they perform through the strength which his Spirit imparts, are styled spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by him.† The Almighty lifts the light of his countenance upon those who offer this sacrifice; he admits them into his family; he rejoices over them to do them good; he chastens them with the tenderness of a father; he seals them by his Spirit unto the day of redemption; and he will receive them hereafter to that incorruptible inheritance which is not due to their services, but a reward of grace, purchased by the death of Christ, secured by his intercession, and "reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

It appears then from the Scriptures that the religion of Jesus, having for its ultimate design the removal of those evils which sin had introduced, destroys the present dominion of sin in all true Christians. Its tendency is to restore upon the soul of man that image of God after which he was made, to revive those sentiments and desires which constitute the excellence and dignity of his nature, to elevate his affections from earth to heaven, and, at the same time, to enforce the discharge of those relative duties which his present condition renders necessary to the comfort of society. It is plain that if this religion were universally acknowledged and obeyed, the character of every individual would be rescued from the degradation of vice, and assimilated to the most exalted beings in the universe; that the happiness of human life would receive the most substantial and permanent improvement, and that the abode of the human race upon earth would be a stage in the progress of their existence to the perfection and the joys of heaven. It is not possible to conceive any design more worthy of the Father of mankind, and more beneficial to his creatures. There is implied in the nature of this design the strongest obligation upon every reasonable being to whom the knowledge of it is communicated, to co-operate in its accomplishment; and it is specially to be

* Heb. vii. 25—28. † 1 Peter ii. 5.

remarked, in a view of the Scripture system, that this co-operation is not only required by precept, but is recommended by the most illustrious examples. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, condescend to take part in this scheme; the angels attend to the progress of it, rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, and are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." All the prophets and holy men in ancient times of whom the Scriptures speak looked forward to it, and contributed in some measure to its approach. And now that it is manifested, every one is called upon to be a worker together with God. The whole Christian world is represented as one great society, united, by their submission to the same Master and by the guidance of the same Spirit, in following "after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:" and "after the things wherewith one may edify another."

We are warranted to speak of this co-operation in accomplishing the great design of the Gospel; for although the Scriptures represent the blessings there revealed as acquired by the interposition of the Son of God, and the character necessary in order to a participation of them as originating from the influence of the Spirit, yet they uniformly address us in a style which supposes that there is something for us to do. We are commanded to "work out our own salvation," and we are required to help our brethren in the good ways of the Lord. We soon bewilder ourselves in our speculations, when we attempt to settle the boundaries between the agency of God and the agency of man. But the Scriptures, without condescending to enter into these discussions, abound in exhortations; and we cannot suppose that our shallow reasonings upon subjects so infinitely above our comprehension, will be sustained as an excuse for neglecting to obey precepts so often repeated and so plainly expressed.

The Scriptures mention various means which the Spirit of God employs, in producing that faith which is the principle of the Christian character, and those good works which flow from this principle. But they have nowhere furnished any marks to distinguish the natural operation of these means from that agency of the Spirit, without

which they are ineffectual. "The wind," says our Lord, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Spirit may act as he will, but there is no warrant to expect that the conversion of any individual will be brought about in a sudden sensible manner. The exercises of a pious education, the habits of virtuous youth, the impressions fixed upon the mind by the continued instruction and conversation of the wise, may have so gradually disposed a person for receiving the Gospel in faith, that he shall not be able to mark any great change which ever took place in the state of his soul, or the time when faith, the gift of God, was imparted to him by the Spirit. Yet this man may appear to be a Christian indeed, by bringing forth in his life those fruits of the Spirit, which are the evidences of faith. The assurance which arises from these evidences may give him that "peace of God which passeth understanding;" and the Spirit itself may bear witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. From hence we deduce the duty of using the means by which the influences of the Spirit are ordinarily conveyed, and the presumption of all who, undervaluing the means, say that they wait for an extraordinary instantaneous illapse of the Spirit. Hence too you perceive the reason why the Scriptures represent the earliest Christians, and speak of Christians in all succeeding ages, as a society distinguished by certain regulations and outward ordinances. If the Spirit operated immediately upon every individual, all these would be a yoke of ceremonies. But if the heavenly gift, as well as the common bounties of Providence, is to be dispensed by the instrumentality of men, the establishment of what we call a church is necessary for "perfecting the saints, and for edifying the body of Christ." So speaks the apostle Paul. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* The promise of our Lord to his apostles,

* Rom. x. 14, 15.

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," seems, by the terms of it, to extend to a much longer period than their ministry required; and that it does really imply the presence of Jesus with his church in all ages, not indeed by extraordinary inspiration, but by his countenance and protection, is manifest from another declaration of his, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church," and from the practice of his apostles, who ordained teachers, overseers of the flock, in every city where they preached, and who made provision that the instruction which they gave by word or writing should be transmitted to future generations. "The things," says Paul to Timothy, the minister of Ephesus, "that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."* Some of the epistles of Paul contain a delineation of the form of those churches to the ministers of which he writes, and directions concerning the conduct of the several office-bearers, and concerning the exercise of discipline. There can be no doubt that this form had been established by his authority; and it is natural for all Christian churches to endeavour to show that their ecclesiastical institutions do not depart far from it. Yet it is nowhere said that this ought to be the form of the church universal; and there are expressions in the epistles of Paul which imply that Christians are allowed to use a prudent accommodation to circumstances in matters of external order. The spirit of Christianity calls our attention to things infinitely more important than the varieties of church government. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:"† and those societies, whose institutions approach nearest to the apostolical practice, have no warrant to condemn their brethren, who have been led by a different progress of society to establishments farther removed from it.

But amidst this difference in matters of order, which the Scriptures do not condemn, there are points resulting from the design of their institution in which all churches ought to agree, otherwise they are not the churches of Christ. They must acknowledge him as their head and

* 2 Tim. ii. 2. † Rom. xiv. 17.

master, teaching no other doctrine than that form of sound doctrine, which is to be gathered from the writings of his apostles. They must maintain that spiritual worship which he hath substituted in place of the idolatry of the heathen, and the ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation; and they must observe, according to his institution, the ordinances which he hath established in his church. We apply the word ordinances or sacraments to baptism and the Lord's Supper; the first, a rite borrowed from the Jewish custom of plunging into water the proselytes from heathenism to the law of Moses, but consecrated by the words of Jesus, and the universal practice of his disciples, as the mode of admitting members into the Christian society; the second, a rite which originated in the affectionate leave which our Lord took of his disciples at the domestic feast that followed the celebration of the Jewish passover. The words of the institution, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come," imply that the Lord's Supper is, by the appointment of Christ, a perpetual ordinance in the Christian church, in which there is a thankful commemoration of the benefits purchased by his death; and the Scriptures lead us to entertain a very high conception of the spiritual effects of this ordinance with regard to those who partake of it worthily, by calling it "the communion of the body and the blood of Christ."* Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the external badges of the Christian profession, the rites by which the author of the Gospel meant that the society which he was to found should be distinguished from every other. They are most apposite to the peculiar doctrines of his religion; there are a simplicity and a significancy in them which accord with the whole character of the Gospel: and, as they were appointed by Jesus himself, no human authority is entitled to add to their number, or to make any material alteration upon the manner of their being observed.

Upon this account, we rank the right administration of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, the preaching the "faith once delivered to the saints," and the maintenance

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

of spiritual worship, as the marks of a Christian church. We gather all the three marks from the nature of such a society, and from several places of Scripture; and we find the three brought into one view in the description, given in the book of Acts, of the 3000 who were added to the number of the disciples by the sermon which Peter preached ten days after the ascension of Jesus. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

The Church of Christ, separated from the rest of the world by these marks of distinction, is not set in opposition to human government. But the Gospel, without entering into any discussion of the claims made by subjects and their rulers, enforces obedience by the example of Jesus and of his apostles, and by various precepts such as these, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."† The ministers of this religion, although invested with a sacred character, and constituted by their master the spiritual rulers of that society, for whose good they labour, are not entitled to assume, in virtue of their office, any measure of civil power. They are not the arbiters between the parties who contend for dominion. But they co-operate with the authority of government, by their prayers, by their exhortations, and by the natural tendency of discourses composed upon the true principles of Christianity, to diffuse a general spirit of industry, sobriety, and order. Upon this account they have received, in every Christian country, the protection of the state; and in these happy lands where we live, the establishment of that form of Church government, which was supposed to be most agreeable to the inclinations of the people, is incorporated with the civil constitution. The ministers of the establishment have legal security for their livings. They have, in critical times, by their influence over public opinion, rendered very important services to their country; and, although that unwillingness to part with any portion of their

* Acts ii. 41, 42. † Matt. xxii. 21. Rom. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

property, which is felt by all the orders of the state, and which grows with the progress of luxury, may prevent any great augmentation of the moderate provision which is made for the ministers of our church, they cannot fail, while they discharge their duty, to continue to receive the countenance, the support, and the indulgence of the legislature.

CHAP. III.

CHRISTIANITY OF INFINITE IMPORTANCE.

OUT of the preceding view of the Scripture system, there arise some general observations upon which I wish to fix your attention, because I think they may be of use in preparing your minds for the more particular discussions upon which we are to enter.

The first observation respects the importance of Christianity.

This is a subject upon which, for the reason which I mentioned in the outset, I have hitherto hardly said any thing. The common method is, to place what is called the necessity of revelation before the evidences of it, and to argue from the necessity to the probability of its having been given. But I have always thought this an unfair and a presumptuous mode of arguing. It appears to me, that we are so little qualified to judge of what is necessary, and so little entitled to build our expectation of heavenly gifts upon our own reasonings, that the only method becoming our distance, and our ignorance of the divine counsels, is first to establish the fact that a revelation has been given, and then to learn its importance by examining its contents. Agreeably to this method, I have led you through the principal evidences of the divine mission of Jesus; I have given a general account of the system contained in those books, which his servants wrote by inspiration; and I now mean to deduce from that account the importance of what the inspired books contain.

There are two views under which the importance of Christianity may be stated. We may consider the Gospel as a republication of the religion of nature, or we may consider it as a method of saving sinners.

SECTION I.

We may consider the religion of Jesus as a republication of the religion of nature. I have adopted this phrase, because, from the very respectable authority by which it has been used, as well as from its own significancy, it has become a fashionable phrase; and yet there are two capital mistakes which the unguarded use of it may occasion. The first is an opinion, that Christianity is merely a republication of the religion of nature, containing nothing more than the doctrines and duties which may be investigated by the light of reason. But it follows clearly from the general view of the Scripture system, that this is an imperfect and false account of Christianity; because in that system there are doctrines concerning the Son and the Spirit, and their offices in the salvation of men, of which reason did not give any intimation; and there are duties, resulting from the interposition recorded in the Gospel, which could not possibly exist till the knowledge of that interposition was communicated to man. The Gospel then, professing to be more than a republication of the religion of nature, a view of its importance, proceeding upon the supposition that it is merely a republication, must be so lame as to do injustice to the system thus misrepresented.

The second mistake, which the unguarded use of this phrase may occasion, is an opinion that the religion of nature is essentially defective either in its constitution, or in the mode of its being promulgated, and that the imperfection originally adhering to it called for amendment. But this is an opinion which appears at first sight unreasonable. If the Creator intended man to be a religious creature, it is to be presumed that he endowed him in the beginning with the faculty of attaining such a knowledge of the divine nature as might be the foundation of religion. If he intended him to be a moral accountable creature, it is to be presumed that he furnished him with a rule of life. These presumptions are confirmed, when we proceed to examine the subject closely; for we cannot analyze the human mind, without discovering that an impression of the Supreme Being is congenial to many of its natural senti-

ments. There is a strain of fair reasoning, by which we are conducted, from principles universally admitted, to some knowledge of the divine attributes. There are obligations implied in the dependence of a reasonable being upon his Creator. There is a certain line of conduct dictated by the constitution and the circumstances of man; and there is a general expectation with regard to the future conduct of the divine government, created by that part of it which we behold, and corresponding to hopes and fears of which we cannot divest ourselves. All this makes up what we call natural religion. And it is manifestly supposed in Scripture; for we read there, that "that which may be known of God is manifest among them: for God hath shown it to them; for the invisible things of God are clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so they are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God." We read that those who had no written law "are a law to themselves, their conscience bearing witness."* And, through the whole of Scripture, there are appeals to those notions of God which are agreeable to right reason, and to that sense of right and wrong which is there considered as a part of the human constitution. Although, therefore, some zealous unwise friends of Christianity have thought of doing honour to revelation by depreciating natural religion, and although you will find that some sects of Christians have been led by their peculiar tenets to deny that man has naturally any knowledge of God, you will not suppose that all who use the phrase, Republication of the religion of nature, adopt these opinions, or even approach to them; and you will find, that the soundest and ablest divines consider natural religion as suited to the circumstances of man at the time of his creation. If you take the known history of the human race in conjunction with the principles of human nature, you will readily perceive that the opinion of these divines is well founded. There would undoubtedly be transmitted from the first man to his descendants a tradition of his coming into the world, and of his finding every thing there

* See Macknight's translation of Rom. ii. 15; i. 18, 19, 20.

new; and if you admit the truth of the Mosaic account, this tradition, by the long lives of the first inhabitants of the earth, would pass for many centuries through very few hands. It is to be presumed, too, even independently of the authority of Moses, that, in the infancy of the human race, there would be a more immediate intercourse between man and his Creator, than after the connexions of society had been formed and established upon the earth. This tradition and this revelation might fix the attention of the posterity of the first man upon those suggestions and deductions of reason, which give some knowledge of the being, the attributes, and the moral government of God; and there might be thus a foundation laid for the universal observance of some kind of worship as the expression of gratitude and trust. From a sense of dependence upon the Creator, there would arise the feeling of obligation to serve him, so that natural religion would come in aid of the dictates of conscience; and the obedience which man yielded to the law of morality, while by the constitution of his nature it was rewarded with inward peace, would enable him, by his apprehension of a righteous Sovereign of the universe, to look forward with good hope to those future scenes of the divine government under which he might be permitted to exist. I do not say that this complete system of pure natural religion ever was established in any country merely by reasoning; but I do say, that all the parts of it may be referred to principles of reason; that early tradition called and directed men to apply these principles to the subject of religion; and that, had they been properly followed out, man would have been possessed, independently of any extraordinary revelation, of a ground of religion, and a rule of life, suited to the circumstances in which he was created.

Having guarded against the second mistake which I mentioned, by fixing in your minds this preliminary point, that the religion of nature was not originally defective, you proceed to consider what importance the Gospel derives from being a republication of that religion.

You will begin with observing it to be very conceivable that the whole system of natural religion may admit of being proved by reason, and yet that particular circumstances may have prevented that continued exercise of reason, by

which the knowledge of it might have been attained. We often see men remaining, through their own fault or neglect, ignorant of many things which they might have known; and the recency of many great discoveries is a proof how slowly the human mind advances to truth, although no one is so absurd as to infer, from the abounding of error, that truth is not agreeable to reason. If there was an early departure from the duties of natural religion, it is plain that this circumstance in the history of mankind would estrange them from that God whom they were conscious of disobeying, would weaken the original impression of that law which they were breaking, and would overcast the hopes connected with the observance of it. The universal tradition of the creation might, for a few generations, in some measure counterbalance this tendency. But as men spread over the earth, the memory of the truths received from their first parents would become fainter; as their passions were excited by a multiplicity of new objects, the restraints to which they had submitted in a simpler state of society would lose their power, and a growing corruption of religion would accompany the progress of vice. This is the very account of the matter which the apostle Paul gives us. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, nor were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." These are the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans; and the best commentary upon them is the religious history of the heathen world. You need not look to those savage tribes, where the faculties of the human mind, depressed by unfavourable circumstances, have a very limited range, and man appears raised but a few degrees above the beasts with whom he associates. Recollect the polished and learned nations, whose philosophy we study, and to whose writings every scholar feels and owns his obligations; and in their religious history you will find abundant confirmation of the words of St. Paul. Although reason was there highly cultivated; although art

and science made distinguished progress; although the public establishments of religion were magnificent and expensive, yet the fathers of science, in respect of religious knowledge, were as children, "and the world by wisdom knew not God." There was a darkness with regard to the nature of God. The knowledge of one supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of all things, the rewarder of those who seek him, the friend and protector of the good, and the avenger of the wicked, this most valuable knowledge was lost in the belief of a multiplicity of gods, who had the passions, the vices, the contentions of men, whose character and conduct, instead of administering comfort in distress, and strength under temptation, sunk the afflicted in despair, and corrupted the manners of the worshipper. There was a darkness with regard to the method of pleasing the gods. Multiplied sacrifices offered with much doubt, and with the fear of giving offence, a pageantry of costly ceremonies, a wearisome round of superstitious observances, made up the religion of the heathen, and excluded that worship in spirit and in truth, which it is the honour of a reasonable creature to offer to the Searcher of hearts. There was a darkness with regard to the duties of life. The voice of conscience was not only left without the support of true religion, but was in many instances perverted by corrupt systems. No scholar will deny, that the laws and the constitution of ancient states cherished certain public virtues which were both useful and splendid; and the names of many citizens will be celebrated as long as the world lasts, for heroism, the love of their country, disinterestedness, and generosity. But any person, who takes a near view of the manners of the great body of the people in ancient times, finds that the established system of morality was loose and debauched; for, although the state often required great exertions from the citizens for its own preservation, no restraint was imposed upon the indulgence of many evil passions, and the grossest vices were conceived to be consistent with pure virtue. There was still greater darkness with regard to the hopes of men. The impression of a future state is so congenial to the mind of man, that it could not be effaced. But the opinions generally entertained with regard to the future place of both the good and the bad were mixed with a number of childish

fables, which exposed to ridicule, and even brought into suspicion, that important truth which they only obscured. The wise men who arose in different ages, although they did not implicitly adopt the vulgar errors, were not fitted to dispel this darkness. Some were led by the absurdity of the received creeds rashly to reject the fundamental articles of religion; and that they might depart as far as possible from the superstition of their countrymen, they denied the being of a God, or they excluded him from the government of the world. Those who did not thus contradict the natural sentiments of the human mind were unable to divest themselves of an attachment to prevailing opinions and universal practice; and while their writings contain many traces of a rational system, they sacrificed in public to the gods of their country. Their writings and their discourses did enlighten the minds of their scholars. But these scholars were few. The great body of the people had neither leisure nor capacity to follow their investigations. But they saw that the practice of the philosophers did not, in any material respect, differ from their own. The authority of the wise, therefore, instead of correcting, confirmed the popular system, and that system, founded in ignorance of the true God, took deep root in the minds of men, and was established by law, by example, and by custom.

I need not dwell longer upon this picture of the religious state of the heathen world. You find it drawn at full length in the books which are commonly read upon this subject, particularly in Clarke's Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, in Leland's Advantages of the Christian Revelation, and in the first volume of Bishop Sherlock's Discourses. But even from the slight sketch that has now been given, it is manifest that there is a very great difference between the system of natural religion, which we are able to deduce from principles of reason, and the forms of religion which obtained in the most enlightened nations. It is true that the land of Judea enjoyed, from very early times, a revelation of one God. The Maker of heaven and earth was worshipped in that country for many ages without the mixture of idolatry, and a system of pure morality was contained in the books that were read in the Jewish synagogue. But the revelation which distinguished this

narrow district was not intended, and was not fitted, to be the light of the world. At the time of our Saviour's birth, it was obscured by tradition; and the law given to the children of Israel, instead of being able to correct the prevailing superstition, stood in need of a more spiritual interpretation than it received from the Jewish doctors. But whatever was the measure of light which the Jews enjoyed, it extended in very scanty uncertain portions to other nations, and they were, as the apostle speaks, "without God, and without hope in the world," till the pure system of natural religion which they had lost was republished in the gospel.

It appears, then, from the religious history of the world, that a republication of the religion of nature was most desirable. And when you attend to the Gospel, you will find that it not only contains the knowledge which was lost, but is peculiarly fitted by its character to give such a republication as the circumstances that have been stated seem to require. Those notions of the being, the attributes, and the government of God, which, as soon as they are proposed, appear most agreeable to right reason, are delivered by a teacher who was sent from heaven to declare God to man. That law which the Almighty wrote in the beginning upon the human heart is taught by authority as the will of our Creator; and the hope of future recompense is established by his promise. The manifest signatures of a divine interposition, which attended the introduction of the Gospel, rouse the attention of the world to the system there republished; the form in which that system is delivered renders it level to the capacities of every one; and the institutions of the Gospel perpetuate the instruction which it conveys.

It is particularly to be remarked upon this subject, that the simplicity which distinguishes the Gospel corresponds in the most admirable manner to its character, as a republication of the religion of nature. The ancient philosophers were accustomed to exercise their reason in profound and subtle disquisitions, and valued any system according to the depth and acuteness of thought which it discovered. There are many points respecting the nature of the soul, the manner of its existence, and its operations, which they had investigated with much care, and which, after all their

research, they found involved in much darkness. But such speculations, however agreeable an amusement they afford to a thinking mind, form no part of natural religion; and accordingly they do not enter into the republication of it. There is not in the Gospel any delineation of the nature and properties of spiritual substances, or any solution of those questions about which the ancient schools were divided. All abstruse points are left just where they were; and the important practical truths, in which the learned and the unlearned are equally concerned, are rested not upon long deductions of reasoning, which the great body of the people find themselves incapable of following, but upon an authority which they are at no loss to apprehend, the simple assertion of men who bring with them the most satisfying evidence that they speak the truth.

The order and precision of a philosophical system might have pleased the learned. But had the Gospel condescended, in this respect, to assimilate itself to works of human genius, it would have borne on its face this manifest inconsistency, that while it professed to teach doctrines of equal importance to all, it taught them in a manner which few only could understand. That it might be of universal use, and might truly supply what was wanting, it came at first "not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom," but with great plainness of words, accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit. The book in which this republication is handed down, from the historical form of some parts, and the familiar epistolary style of others, imprints itself deeply upon every understanding, mingles itself readily with the habits and modes of thinking of ordinary men, and is retained in the memory, so as to be easily applied upon every occasion. Those who are not accustomed to form general views, to connect in their minds the parts of a whole, or to act systematically, carry away from the reading of this book detached sentences and precepts, which minister to their comfort and improvement: and even when their quotations discover narrow or mistaken notions of theology, their hearts are made better by the facility with which the quotations occur.

To all this there must be added that popular and familiar mode of instruction, which the institutions of the Gos-

pel furnish. The crowd of worshippers, who assembled in a heathen temple to behold a splendid sacrifice, retired without any rational conceptions of the Supreme Being. No attempt was made to connect the ordinary services of religion with the information of the great body of the people, and lessons of morality were confined to the schools of the philosophers. But all who live in a Christian country enjoy, by the republication of natural religion, a standing kind of admonition, with which the world was unacquainted in former ages. Those truths and those duties which are intimately connected with the happiness of society, as well as with the eternal interests of man, are placed before them in a language which every one that is willing to hear may understand. Persons who feel themselves unequal in every other respect are admitted to receive the same benefit and consolation. The ignorant are enlightened, and the careless are put in remembrance.

And thus, as we formerly found that the system of natural religion contained in the books of the New Testament is infinitely more perfect than any that had been published before, as we found also that the growing improvement of those that have been published since cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause than to the benefit which they derived from this republication, so to the same cause we may ascribe the universal diffusion of the principles of natural religion in every Christian country. The public establishment of Christianity is a standing memorial, a perpetual remembrancer of the fundamental truths of religion, and the great duties of life. It has given the vulgar in our days more sound and enlarged conceptions of the nature and government of God, of the extent of our obligations and our hopes, than almost any philosopher in ancient times was able to attain; and it is not easy to find any words, which so perfectly express the difference between the heathen world and those countries where Christianity is professed in simplicity and purity, as the words by which Jeremiah foretold the change. "After those days," saith the Lord, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts: And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they

shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."*

The sum of what has been said upon the first view of the importance of Christianity is this. The Gospel is a republication of the religion of nature, imparting that knowledge upon this subject, which is agreeable to the deductions of the most enlightened reason, but which unfavourable circumstances had prevented any man from attaining by means of reason, removing those errors to which no other method of instruction had applied any effectual remedy, and diffusing by its institutions, to men of every condition, the information, the instruction, and the comfort which it conveys. If knowledge be better than ignorance; if, of all kinds of knowledge, an acquaintance with the principles of true religion contribute the largest share to the consolation and improvement of human life; and if this most valuable knowledge be now rendered accessible, extensive, and permanent,—Christianity, which has accomplished so happy a change by republishing the religion of nature, is in this view most important. It deserves to be received with thankfulness, to be cherished with care, to be honoured and encouraged by every friend of mankind. He, whose discourse or example recommends Christianity to others, contributes by so doing to preserve and to spread the light that is in the world. He, who employs any means to depreciate the public establishment of Christianity, does so far contribute to extinguish that light, and to bring back those times of heathen darkness, from which this republication of natural religion hath rescued a great part of the human race.

SECTION II.

THE general account of the Scripture system presented Christianity to us as a remedy for the depravity which has pervaded the human race. I am now to illustrate its importance considered in this view.

* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

Although the religion of nature be liable to be obscured by the general practice of vice, yet if it were fitted, by its original constitution, to be the religion of a sinner, nothing more than a republication would at any time be required, in order to render it suitable to the circumstances of man. But even after the religion of nature has been restored in its original purity, the provision made by it for the comfort, the direction, and the hope of man, is inadequate to the new situation in which he is placed, by being a sinner. In this new situation, the deformity, the weakness, the depravity of mind, which belong to sin, enter into his condition; he is also a transgressor of the divine law, and as such is liable to the consequences of transgression. But religion cannot exist in such a situation, without the knowledge of some method of obtaining pardon. For the expression which you read in the 130th Psalm, is strictly accurate. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" *i. e.* there can be no fear of God, no religion to a sinner, unless there be forgiveness with God: and, therefore, the first thing to be considered in judging of the importance of Christianity under this second view is, What are the hopes of forgiveness in the religion of nature? From whence are these hopes derived?

It is manifest, that the hopes of forgiveness are not necessarily connected with that law which the religion of nature delivers. A law enjoins obedience, promises reward, it may be, to those who obey, and always denounces punishment against those who disobey. It would destroy itself, if it were delivered in these terms: You are commanded to obey, but you shall be forgiven although you transgress. The hopes of forgiveness, then, are to be sought in some part of the religion of nature distinct from the law. But it is not pretended that the religion of nature contains any specific promise of forgiveness, the record of which may be pleaded by transgressors as a bar to the full execution of the sanctions of the law. It is not possible to show the place where such a record is to be found. And therefore there is no source from which the hopes of forgiveness can be drawn under the religion of nature, but those general notions of the compassion of

God, from which it may appear probable that he will accept of the repentance of a sinner, and reinstate in his favour those who have offended him, when they return to their duty. It is admitted, by all who have just notions of the divine character, that the same process of reasoning, which conducts us to the knowledge of the being of God, establishes in our minds a belief of his goodness. It is natural to think that the goodness of the Supreme Being, when exercised to frail fallible creatures, will assume the form of compassion or long-suffering. We see, in the course of his Providence, various instances of a delay or mitigation of punishment; and there are many appearances, which clearly indicate that we live under a merciful constitution. But we are by no means warranted from them to draw this general conclusion, that all who repent will finally be forgiven under the Divine government. You will be satisfied that this conclusion goes very far beyond the premises, if you attend to the following circumstances. The same process of reasoning which leads us to the belief of the goodness of God, ascertains also his holiness, his wisdom, and his justice, all of which seem to require the punishment of sinners. It is true that those perfections, of which our conceptions lead us to speak as separate from one another, unite in the Deity with entire harmony to form one purpose, and that there never can be any opposition among them in the Divine mind, or in the execution of the Divine counsels. But it is impossible for us to say how far any particular exercise of justice or of goodness is consistent with this harmony; and it is manifest that every reasoning, which proceeds upon a partial view of the divine character, must be insecure. Further, we are not acquainted with the relations which subsist amongst the parts of the universe. But we can suppose that reasons of the divine conduct, inexplicable to us, may arise from these relations; and even in that part of the universe which is most open to our observation, although we cannot always account for the limitations of the divine goodness, we can mark instances where the long-suffering of God seems to be exhausted, where repentance ceases to be of any avail, and men are left to endure, without alleviation, all the evils which they had incurred by transgression. It is possible that instances of this kind, which

are very numerous, may be mingled with the examples of compassion in the Divine government to guard us against the conclusion which repeated compassion might seem to warrant, to give us warning that the time for repentance has an end, and that, in the final issue of the system in which we are placed, the obstinate transgressors of the divine law shall bear without remedy the full weight of that punishment which they deserve.

But even although there were not so many analogies in nature, conspiring to show that repentance is not always efficacious, the bare impossibility of demonstrating, from any known principles, that every penitent shall be forgiven, is sufficient to evince the infinite importance of Christianity. If the religion of nature, with all those intimations of the divine goodness, which are the ground of trust and hope to those who obey, does not give a positive assurance that it is consistent with the nature and government of God to forgive all who transgress, then it is plain that the new situation, into which men are brought by being sinners, renders a promise of pardon most desirable to them, because without this special declaration of the divine will, their religion must rest upon a very precarious foundation; and therefore the Gospel, whose peculiar character it is to contain such a declaration, which publishes the forgiveness of sins through the blood of him, by whom all that believe are justified, and have peace with God, deserves the name of ευαγγελιον, good tidings, better than any other message which the world ever heard, and is in truth the best gift which heaven could bestow. It is further to be observed, that while the religion of nature leaves the reason of a sinner to struggle with his passions, and does not revive his soul, under the experience of his weakness, by the assurance of his receiving any assistance in the conflict, the Gospel contains a promise of grace as well as of pardon. It confirms the law of his mind by those influences of the Spirit, which we stated as perfectly consistent with the reasonable nature of man, and while it publishes the remission of sins that are past, places him in circumstances so favourable to his moral improvement as may prevent a repetition of sins. That progress in virtue, which the grace of the Gospel forms, is connected with the hope of a reward, which is infinitely

more precious than the most exalted creature of God can claim as a recompense due to his obedience, but which, having been purchased by the death of Christ, is reserved in heaven to crown the feeble divided services of a degenerate race, and the security of which is so completely incorporated with the whole constitution of the law, that no doubt of this unmerited gift being at length conferred can remain in the breasts of those who live under the power of the Christian religion.

From the circumstances that have been mentioned, you may mark the precise difference between the religion of nature and the religion of Christ. The former has no original defect. When properly understood, *i. e.* when conclusions are fairly and fully drawn from premises which the light of reason may discover, it includes the most exalted views of the perfections of God, and of his moral government, and a complete delineation of the duties of man as a creature of God, an individual, and a member of society. But being, by its constitution, the religion of those who perform their duty, it holds forth only general doubtful grounds of hope to those who transgress. The Gospel, on the other hand, having been revealed after transgression was introduced, and professing to be the religion of sinners, makes an adequate provision for the new situation of man. It is this difference which constitutes the infinite importance of Christianity. A remedy is there offered for that state of depravity which is acknowledged to be universal. The remedy is complete in its nature. But it is not of use to those by whom it is rejected. In what degree its efficacy may extend to those who never heard of it we have no warrant to say. But it is most reasonable, that those, who refuse the remedy when it is offered to them, should remain under the disease. The disease was not created by the Gospel; it existed beforehand, and unless it be removed the natural effects of it must be felt. The Scripture, therefore, says, that "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,"* *i. e.* the sentence of condemnation, which his sins deserve, retains its force. And he cannot surely complain, if when he despises the

* John iii. 36.

deliverance which the Gospel brings, he continues in the same state in which the whole world would have been, if there had been no Gospel.

Hitherto we have deduced the importance of Christianity from its suitableness to the present circumstances of man, from the value of the blessings which are peculiar to this religion, and from this plain position, that a rejection of it necessarily implies a forfeiture of its peculiar blessings. But we have not yet exhausted the subject, and there remain some awful views of the importance of Christianity, which imply that the rejection of it is not only a forfeiture of blessings, but is attended with a high degree of positive guilt.

In order to enter into these views, you will recollect, from the general account of the Scripture system, that the manner in which the assurance of pardon is conveyed by the Gospel, discloses to us the Son and the Spirit of God, two persons, of whose existence the light of nature had not given any intimation, but who, by their active interposition in our behalf, claim the reverence and gratitude of all to whom that interposition is made known. The sentiments which it becomes us to entertain towards any person correspond to the knowledge that we have of his character and his exertions. And therefore as the first duties of natural religion respect the God and Father of all, who is made known to us by his works, so there are duties resulting immediately from that knowledge of the Son and the Spirit which is communicated by the Gospel; and a failure in these duties is as truly a breach of morality as any transgression of the law of nature.

It may be said, indeed, that these duties are binding only upon those who study the revelation of the Gospel, and that if any person willingly remains ignorant of the peculiar nature of that interposition which it records, he is not answerable for neglecting the duties created by that interposition. But it will readily occur to you in answer to this objection, that a reasonable creature is as much bound to make himself acquainted with the extent of his duty, as to perform it after it is known: and you will find that the plea, drawn from wilful ignorance or unbelief, to excuse the neglect of the peculiar duties of the Gospel, is diametrically opposite to the declarations of

Scripture. We read there, that "he that believeth not is condemned," for this very reason, "because he hath not believed on the name of the Son of God." * His unbelief is the cause of his condemnation. The enemies of Christianity have formed, out of such declarations, a very heavy charge against our religion. They say that the Gospel means to threaten men into a belief of its doctrines, and that the manner in which we are now stating the importance of Christianity is calculated to supply the defect of evidence by working upon the principle of fear, and to force assent in spite of reason. We admit that if this charge were true, the Gospel would indeed be unworthy of God, and unworthy of man. We admit that authority never can supply the place of truth, and that not even the immediate prospect of danger can compel a reasonable creature to yield his assent without sufficient evidence. But, at the same time, we assert, that it is often incumbent upon a reasonable creature to exercise his reason, and that he may deserve punishment for refusing his assent, when sufficient evidence is offered him. In common life we meet with many instances where men bring calamities upon themselves and their families, by not believing what they would have believed, if they had bestowed proper attention. It is therefore no new doctrine, and it is perfectly analogous to the ordinary procedure of the Divine government, that men should suffer for unbelief; and in the case of the Gospel, there are circumstances which render unbelief in a peculiar degree criminal. The Gospel contains the strongest call which a reasonable creature can receive to exercise his reason in judging of evidence. It professes to be a message from God, the author of human nature, affording man that assistance in recovering the dignity and happiness of his nature, of which he is conscious that he stands in need. The person, who delivered this gracious and seasonable message, appealed to a series of prophecies meant to prepare the world for his coming, and to works of his own, far exceeding human power. Unlike the former servants of heaven, he called himself the Son of God; and he introduced his doctrine not as a temporary institution, looking forward to something be-

* John iii. 18.

yond itself, but as a complete, universal, and unchangeable religion. "Last of all," says Jesus, "he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son." We behold here every circumstance, which is fitted to rouse attention, and which can render inattention unpardonable. That the most exalted Spirit should refuse to listen to any thing which bears the name of a message from his Creator, is presumption. But, that a feeble imperfect creature, who is conscious that he has offended God, should precipitately reject a religion which brings the offers of mercy, is madness. It might be expected, that, even although he doubted of its truth, he would eagerly examine it, because, if it be true, it brings him the most joyful tidings, and, if it be true, to reject it is to reject the counsel of God against himself, and to exclude himself from all future hope of mercy. For you will notice, and it is an awful consideration which places the importance of Christianity in the strongest light, that, however men might flatter themselves, under the simple religion of nature, with general reasonings concerning divine mercy, the moment that a special revelation is published, promising the mercy of God upon certain terms, and disclosing a particular manner of dispensing pardon to those who repent, these general reasonings are at an end. If every one must admit that God knows better than we do, what is becoming his nature and consistent with his administration, it follows undeniably that it is most presumptuous in those who acknowledge that pardon is necessary, to reject the particular method of dispensing pardon that is revealed, and yet still to build upon uncertain reasonings an expectation that it will be dispensed. If the words which Jesus uttered be true, the hopes of nature are included in the hopes of the Gospel, and no hope is left to those who, neglecting the "great salvation spoken by the Lord," betake themselves to the religion of nature.

"This," then, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is supposed by your profession that you understand and acknowledge the infinite importance of Christianity considered in this view; and it will be your peculiar business to impress upon the minds of others a sense of that importance. For this purpose you must "be

ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you;" you must show, by your manner of defending Christianity, that you are not afraid of the light, and that you consider the evidences of Christianity as capable of bearing the narrowest scrutiny, and those whom you call to receive it as entitled to examine into the truth. But your chief difficulty will be to bring them to this examination with a fair unprejudiced mind. You will meet with many who ascribe to want of evidence, or to a peculiarity in their understanding, what does in fact proceed from an evil heart. You have to encounter that pride which refuses to submit to the righteousness of God, and those evil passions, which, because they do not expect to receive indulgence under the Gospel, create a secret wish that it were false. If your labours, performed with good intention, with diligence, with prudence, and with ability, shall, through the blessing of God, overcome these obstacles, shall form in the minds of your hearers what our Lord calls a good and honest heart, and shall establish their faith upon a rational foundation, you will not only promote the welfare of society by teaching in the most effectual manner the great duties of morality, but you will be the instruments in the hand of God of saving the souls of men from death, and so carrying forward the great purpose for which this dispensation of grace was given.

I have chosen throughout this chapter to avoid a phrase which you often hear, the necessity of the Christian revelation, because that phrase, when unguardedly used, is apt to convey improper notions. It may be conceived to imply, that God was in justice bound to grant this revelation; whereas it should always be remembered, in theological discussions, that sinners have no claim to any thing, and that the Gospel is a free gift proceeding from the unmerited grace of God, for the bestowing or withholding of which He is in no degree accountable to any of his creatures. The phrase, necessity of the Christian revelation, may also be conceived to imply, that it was impossible for God, in any other way, to save the world; whereas we have no principles that can enable us to judge what it is possible for God to do. We investigate, according to the measure of our understanding, the fitness of

that which he has done. But there is an irreverence in our saying confidently, that infinite wisdom could not have devised other ways of accomplishing the same end. I have chosen rather to speak of the desirableness and the importance of Christianity, which imply all that should be meant by the necessity of it, viz. that it republishes with clearness and authority the religion of nature; that it gives the penitent that assurance of pardon which the religion of nature did not afford them; that it brings along with it an indispensable obligation upon those to whom it is made known to examine its evidence; and that it leaves those who wantonly reject it to perish in their sins.

I have spoken of this subject with an earnestness and seriousness suited to its nature. You often hear it stated from the pulpit, and there are many printed sermons where it is fully illustrated. It enters into most of the books which treat of the evidences of Christianity. But it requires from you a particular study; and when you have leisure to bestow close attention upon it, I would recommend to you to read the ablest book that ever was written against the importance of Christianity. I mean Tindal's book, entitled, Christianity as old as the Creation. The object of the book is to show that the law given to man at his creation was complete; that it is published in the most perfect manner; that it does not admit of amendment; and that the additions, which succeeding revelations profess to make to it, are a proof that these revelations are spurious. The positions of this book, then, if they be true, completely annihilate the importance of Christianity; for they go thus far to show that there is nothing in the Gospel true, but what was from the beginning contained in the religion of nature, and published more universally, and with much less danger of error, by being written on the heart of man, than by being recorded in the books of the New Testament. I would not advise you to read this book, which is written with great art, without at the same time reading some of the answers to it. Leland, on the Advantages of the Christian Revelation, has given a full picture of the religious and moral state of the world, when the Gospel was published, which demonstrates that there is much false colouring in Tindal's book. Foster also, the author of Sermons and Discourses on Natural Religion, has written against Tindal. But the most complete an-

swer, which ought to be read by every student who reads Tindal, is Conybeare's Defence of Revealed Religion. There have been few abler divines than Bishop Conybeare. He had a clear logical understanding, and his talents were whetted and called forth by very formidable antagonists. He was contemporary with Lord Bolingbroke, whose numerous writings against Christianity are replete with false philosophy, malicious misrepresentations of facts, and keen satire. Lord Bolingbroke used to say, that it cost more trouble to demolish Conybeare's outworks, than to take the citadel of any of his other opponents; an expression which implies that this divine took always strong ground, and knew well where to rest his defence. Accordingly in his answer to Tindal's book, he has detected all its sophisms and equivocations: he has affixed a precise meaning to his words, and has shewn, in a train of the most convincing and masterly reasoning, that that republication of the religion of nature, and that method of redemption which the Gospel contains, were most desirable; and that these views of the importance of Christianity are not inconsistent with the original perfection which every sound theist ascribes to the law of nature. Bishop Conybeare's book is a complete illustration of the importance of Christianity. But there are three other names which cannot be omitted at this time. Clarke, in his Evidences, has stated fully what is commonly called the necessity of revelation. In the first volume of Sherlock's Discourses, which is almost wholly occupied with this subject, you find those luminous views which distinguish the writings of that eminent prelate: and Bishop Butler, in the first chapter of the second part of his Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, with rather less obscurity than is found in other chapters of that precious treatise, but with no less depth of thought, has stated, in a short compass, the importance of Christianity.

Leland on the Christian Revelation.
Foster on Natural Religion.
Conybeare's Defence of Revealed Religion.
Clarke's Evidences.
Sherlock's Discourses.
Butler's Analogy.
Paley's Evidences.
Brown against Tindal.
Halyburton on Deism.

CHAP. IV.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE SCRIPTURE SYSTEM.

A SECOND general observation arising out of the short account of the Scripture system is this, that we may expect to find in that system many things which we do *not fully* comprehend. Deistical writers urge this as an objection against the Gospel. They say that it is the very character of revelation to make every thing plain, but that a system which contains mysteries, leaves us still in the dark, and, therefore, that the mysteries, with which the Gospel abounds, are a convincing evidence that it did not proceed from the God of light and truth. The same word, mysteries, which generally enters into the statement of this objection, occurs often in the writings and the discourses of many pious Christians, who mean to speak of the Gospel with the highest reverence. And yet, there is reason to think, that neither the former class of writers, nor the latter, has paid a proper attention to the Scripture use of the word. Upon this account, before I proceed to answer the objection by illustrating my second observation, I shall state the sense in which the Scriptures use the word mystery, and in so doing shall explain the reason why I choose to avoid that word upon this subject.

The ceremonies of the ancient heathen worship were of two kinds. Some were public, performed openly in the temple, before the great body of the people who were supposed to join in them. Others were private, performed in a retired place, often in the night, far from the view of the multitude; and they were never divulged to the crowd, but were communicated only to a few enlightened worshippers. The persons to whom these secret rites were made known were said to be initiated; and the rites them-

selves were called μυστηρια. Every god had his secret as well as his open worship; and hence various mysteries are occasionally mentioned by ancient writers. "But," says Dr. Warburton, who has investigated this subject in his Divine Legation of Moses, "of all the mysteries, those which bore that name by way of eminence, the Eleusinian, celebrated at Athens in honour of Ceres, were by far the most renowned, and, in course of time, eclipsed and almost swallowed up the rest. Hence Cicero, speaking of Eleusina, says, *ubi initiantur gentes orarum ultimæ.*"* I have quoted this passage from Warburton, because it contains the reason why you seldom read of any other than the Eleusinian mysteries, although the word had originally a general acceptation. The theme of the word is μυω, *occludo*, from whence comes μυειν, *in sacris instituo*, referring to the silence which the initiated were required to observe; and from μυειν comes μυστηριον, the amount of which may be considered as equivalent to *arcanum*. The writers of the New Testament have adopted this word, which was at that time well understood; and it is used by them in a variety of instances to denote that which God had purposed, but which was not known to men till he was pleased to reveal it. When the disciples of Jesus came to him, and said, "Why speakest thou to the people in parables?" his answer was, Matt. xiii. 11, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," *i. e.* there are circumstances respecting the nature and the history of my religion, which I explain clearly to you my disciples by whom it is to be published, but which it is proper at present to convey to the people under the disguise of parables. You will not understand, however, from these words, that there were always to continue, under the religion of Jesus, two kinds of instruction, one for the initiated and one for the vulgar; for our Lord had said to these very disciples a little before, Matt. x. 26, 27, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops."

* Vol. ii. book ii. 4.

Accordingly, when the apostles came forth to execute their commission, the character under which they appeared is thus expressed by Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 1: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:" dispensers of that knowledge which was communicated to us first, for this very purpose, that we might be the instruments of conveying it to others. Paul calls the Gospel, Col. i. 26,—"The mystery hid from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to his saints," hid from ages, because it was not investigated by reason, and must have remained for ever unknown, if it had not been declared by God in his word. The rejection of the Jewish nation, who had always considered themselves as the favourite people of heaven, is called a mystery, Rom. xi. 25, because it was very opposite to the opinions and expectations of men; and for the same reason, the calling of the heathen by the Gospel to partake of all the privileges of the people of God is in many places styled a mystery, Ephes. iii. 3, 5, 6. I mention only one other instance, 1 Cor. xv. 51. The resurrection of the body is called a mystery, because although many philosophers had speculated concerning the immortality of the soul, it had never entered into the minds of any that the body was to rise.

Dr. Campbell, in the first volume of his new translation of the Gospels, has one dissertation upon the word mystery. He states that the leading sense of μυστηριον, in the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament, is *arcanum*, any thing not published to the world, though perhaps communicated to a select number. With his usual accurate and minute attention, he mentions another meaning very nearly related to the former, or more properly only a particular application of that general meaning. It is sometimes employed to denote the figurative sense, which is conveyed under any fable, parable, allegory, symbolical action, or dream. The reason of this application is obvious. The literal meaning of a fable is open to the senses; the spiritual meaning requires penetration and reflection, and is known only to the intelligent. In Rev. i. 20, and xvii. 7, John saw the figures, but he did not understand the meaning intended to be conveyed by them, till it was explained to him by the angel. To

him it was *arcanum*. There is an allusion to this import of the word mystery in Mark iv. 11. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." The Eleusinian mysteries being accessible only to the initiated, the early Christians, to whom the language and the practice of the heathen were familiar, transferred to the Lord's Supper the word mysteries; because from that ordinance were excluded the catechumens, who had not yet been baptized, and the penitents, who had not yet been restored to the communion of the church. It was administered only to those who had been initiated by baptism; and from fear of persecution it was often administered in the night. On account of this secrecy, and the select number of communicants, strangers might apprehend a similarity between the Lord's Supper and the heathen mysteries; and from whomsoever this use of the word originated, the Christians might not be unwilling to retain it, as conveying, according to the language of the times, an exalted conception of their distinguishing rites.

It appears then, from this deduction, that there are three acceptations of the word μυστηριον. In the New Testament it is used to express that which God had purposed from the beginning, which was not known till he was pleased to reveal it, but which by the revelation was shown and made manifest. With early ecclesiastical writers it means the solemn positive rites of our religion; and so, in the communion service of the Church of England, the elements after consecration are called holy mysteries. In modern theological writings, and in the objections of the deists, mystery denotes that which is in its nature so dark and incomprehensible, that it cannot be understood after it is revealed. As this sense is really opposite to the sense in which the Scriptures use the word mystery, it appears to me advisable, both in discourses to the people, and in theological discussions, to choose other expressions for denoting that which cannot be comprehended.

But although, by avoiding an unscriptural use of a Scripture word, we may guard against the abuses and mistakes which the change of its meaning has probably occasioned, yet we readily admit that there are, in the Scrip-

ture system of the Gospel, many points which we do not fully comprehend. And this is so far from being a solid objection to the Gospel, that to every wise inquirer it appears to arise from the nature of that dispensation. In order to account for the difficulties which are found in the revelation made by the Gospel, we may follow the same division which occurred when we were speaking of the importance of Christianity, and consider the Gospel as a republication of the religion of nature, and as a method of saving sinners.

1. Even were the Gospel nothing more than a republication of the religion of nature, we could not expect to find every thing in it plain; for we have experience that many points in natural religion, concerning the evidence of which we do not entertain any doubt, are to our understanding full of difficulties. We have very indistinct conceptions of the nature of spirits, or of the manner in which spirit acts upon matter. The eternity and infinity of God are connected with all the intricate speculations concerning time and space. The origin of evil, under the government of a Being, whose wisdom and goodness are not restrained by any want of power, has perplexed the human mind ever since it began to reason; and liberty, the very essence of morality, appears to be affected by that dependence of a moral agent upon the influence of a superior Being, which is inseparable from the notion of his being a creature of God. Reason is unable to solve all the difficulties that have been started upon these points, yet she draws, from premises within her reach, this conclusion, that a Spirit who exists in all times and places exercises a moral government over free agents. Revelation has given assurance to this conclusion, has diffused the knowledge of it, and inculcates with authority the practical lessons which it implies. But revelation, far from professing to enter into the speculations connected with this conclusion, leaves man, with regard to many metaphysical questions that have no influence upon his virtue or happiness, in the same darkness which all the sages of antiquity experienced. A clear explication of these points, supposing it possible, might have afforded amusement to a few inquisitive minds. To the great body of mankind, for whose sake the religion of nature is republished in the Gospel, it is insignificant,

and would have only loaded a system whose simplicity is fitted to render it of universal use, with subtleties which the generality find neither interesting nor intelligible. Such an explication, then, would have been of little importance. I said, supposing it possible; for they who demand it know not what they ask. Difficulties in any subject are merely relative to the understanding and opportunities of those who consider it. As a child cannot form any conception of the nature of the exertion which is made, or of the object which is proposed in many of the employments of men; as a man, whose mind has been untutored, or whose observation has been narrow, wonders at the discoveries of Astronomy, or the refined operations of art, and while he believes that both exist, is incapable of apprehending the principles upon which they proceed; so it is likely that we feel ourselves involved in an inextricable labyrinth upon questions, which superior orders of being can easily resolve. We inhabit a spot in the creation of God. We are placed in a system consisting of many parts, the relations and dependencies of which are beyond our observation; and our faculties in vain attempt to explore the intimate essence of those objects which are most familiar to us. There are measures of knowledge to which our condition is manifestly not suited. There is a degree of mental exertion of which we may be supposed incapable. "Now we see through a glass darkly;" and it is forgetting our condition and our character, to ask that every thing in nature should at present be made plain to our apprehension. If there be such a thing as Natural Religion, the comfort and improvement which it administers cannot imply a kind of illumination, which man is not qualified to receive. They must be compatible with the rank which he holds in the intellectual system, and they may leave him unacquainted with many parts of that system, the whole extent of which he is at present incapable of apprehending. It cannot, therefore, be stated as an objection to the gospel, that while, by republishing the religion of nature, it restores that comfort and improvement in the most perfect manner, it keeps his knowledge confined within the limits suited to his condition. Other orders of spirits may clearly apprehend the nature of objects, and the solution of questions, to which his faculties are inade-

quate; because the knowledge of them is not, in any degree, necessary for his enjoyment of the portion, or his discharge of the duties, assigned him by his Creator.

2. If difficulties belong to the Gospel, as it is a republication of the religion of nature, we may expect to meet with more difficulties, when we consider it in its higher character, as the religion of sinners. By this character the Gospel makes provision for a new situation, which had brought upon men evils, any remedy of which was not suggested by their knowledge of nature. We found that all those notions of the Divine character and government, which constitute natural religion, fail us in this new situation; and that the assurance of pardon rests upon an interposition of the Creator. What parts of the universe may be affected by that interposition we cannot say; and it is presumptuous to think, that all the branches and the ends of it may be fully comprehended by our understanding, since it is a subject confessedly farther beyond our reach than any part of nature. But if the revelation of the Gospel leaves no doubt that the interposition has been made, and that the effects of it with regard to us are attained, this is all the knowledge that is of real importance upon the subject. Clear evidence of the fact is sufficient to revive our hopes; and although the manner in which the interposition is calculated to produce the effect had not been, in any measure, revealed to us, we should have been in no worse situation with regard to this fact than with regard to many others in nature, most important to our being and comfort, where we know that an effect exists, but have no apprehension of the kind of connexion between the effect and its cause. If this interposition involve the agency of other beings that are not made known to us by the light of nature, and if their agency be a ground of hope, or the principle of any duty, the revelation must inform us that they exist. But the knowledge of their existence and agency does not require an intimate acquaintance with their nature. There are in natural religion many intricate questions concerning the manner in which the Deity exists, that do not in the least affect the proof of his existence. The manner in which those beings exist, who are made known to us merely by revelation, may be still farther removed beyond the reach of our fa-

culties. At any rate, the knowledge of it is not necessary for the purposes of the revelation; and, therefore, although so very little be revealed concerning them, as to leave impenetrable darkness over all the speculations by which men attempt to investigate the manner in which they are distinguished from one another, and the manner in which they are united, still their existence and their agency may be placed beyond doubt by explicit declarations, and the reliance upon these declarations may establish, on the firmest grounds, that hope which the revelation was meant to convey.

The state of the case, then, with regard to the difficulties of religion, is precisely this. We have, by reason, the means of acquiring that knowledge which the orginal condition of our being required, but not that which our curiosity may desire; and accordingly when we launch into questions and speculations of mere curiosity, our pride is rebuked, and we are reminded that "we are of yesterday, and know nothing." The Gospel, by the provision which it has made for the change in our original condition, has opened to us a state of things in many respects new, by which we perceive how very limited the range of our natural knowledge was. But this state of things is intimated only in so far as the provision for our condition renders an intimation necessary; and while all the facts of real importance to our comfort and hope are published with the most satisfying evidence, we are checked in our speculations concerning this new state of things, by the very scanty measure of light which is afforded us to guide them. This is a view of the extent of our knowledge not very flattering to our pride. But it may be favourable both to our happiness and to our improvement; and if we are wise enough to cultivate the temper of mind which such a view is peculiarly calculated to form, we may derive much profit from the bounds which are set to our inquiries, as well as from the enlargement which is given to our hopes. There does arise, however, from this view of our knowledge, one most interesting and fundamental question, which is the subject of my third preliminary observation, What is the use of reason in matters of religion?

CHAP. V.

USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

If the Christian religion contain many points which we do not fully comprehend, and if we be required to believe these points, a difficulty seems to arise with regard to the boundaries between reason and faith. This is a subject upon which it is of very great importance to form distinct apprehensions, before we proceed to a particular consideration of the doctrines of Christianity. When you study church history, you will find that this question has been agitated in various forms from the beginning of Christianity to this day. It is not my province to relate the progress of this dispute, or the different appearances which it has assumed. And, in truth, many of the controversies to which it has given occasion are insignificant, because when they are examined they appear to be purely verbal. Those, who said that reason was of no use in matters of religion, sometimes meant nothing more than that religion derived no benefit from that which is really the abuse of reason, false philosophy, and the jargon of metaphysics. The argument was kept up by the equivocation between reason and the abuse of reason; and had the disputants shown themselves willing to understand one another by defining the terms which they used, it would have appeared that there was very little difference in their opinions.

But this account will not apply to all the controversies that have turned upon this question. The sublime incomprehensible nature of some of the Christian doctrines has so completely subdued the understanding of many pious men, as to make them think it presumptuous to apply reason any how to the revelation of God; and the many instances, in which the simplicity of truth has been corrupted by an alliance with philosophy, confirm them in the belief that it is safer, as well as more respectful, to resign

their minds to devout impressions, than to exercise their understandings in any speculations upon sacred subjects. Enthusiasts and fanatics of all different names and sects agree in decrying the use of reason, because it is the very essence of fanaticism to substitute in place of the sober deductions of reason, the extravagant fancies of a disordered imagination, and to consider these fancies as the immediate illumination of the Spirit of God. Insidious writers in the deistical controversy have pretended to adopt those sentiments of humility and reverence, which are inseparable from true Christians, and even that total subjection of reason to faith which characterises enthusiasts. A pamphlet was published about the middle of the last century, that made a noise in its day, although it is now forgotten, entitled, Christianity not Founded on Argument, which, while to a careless reader it may seem to magnify the Gospel, does in reality tend to undermine our faith, by separating it from a rational assent; and Mr. Hume, in the spirit of this pamphlet, concludes his Essay on Miracles, with calling those, dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. "Our most holy religion," he says, with a disingenuity very unbecoming his respectable talents, "is founded on faith, not on reason,"—and "mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity." The Church of Rome, in order to subject the minds of her votaries to her authority, has reprobated the use of reason in matters of religion. She has revived an ancient position, that things may be true in theology which are false in philosophy; and she has, in some instances, made the merit of faith to consist in the absurdity of that which is believed.

The extravagance of these positions has produced, since the Reformation, an opposite extreme. While those who deny the truth of revelation consider reason as in all respects a sufficient guide, the Socinians, who admit that a revelation has been made, employ reason as the supreme judge of its doctrines, and boldly strike out of their creed every article that is not altogether conformable to those notions which may be derived from the exercise of reason.

These controversies, concerning the use of reason in matters of religion, are disputes not about words, but

about the essence of Christianity. They form a most interesting object of attention to a student of divinity, because they affect the whole course and direction of his studies; and yet, it appears to me that a few plain observations are sufficient to ascertain where the truth lies in this subject.

1. The first use of reason in matters of religion is to examine the evidences of revelation. For the more entire the submission which we consider as due to every thing that is revealed, we have the more need to be satisfied that any system which professes to be a divine revelation does really come from God. It is plain from the review which we took of the evidence of Christianity, that very large provision is made for affording our minds a rational conviction of its divine original; and the style of argument, which pervades the discourses of our Lord, and the sermons and the writings of his apostles, is a continued call upon us to exercise our reason in judging of that provision. I need not quote particular passages; for that man must have read the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles with a very careless or a very prejudiced eye, who does not feel the manner, in which our religion was proposed by its divine author and his immediate disciples, to be a clear refutation of the position which I mentioned lately, that Christianity is not founded on argument. You will recollect too, that all the different branches of the evidence of Christianity are ultimately resolvable into some principle of reason. The internal evidence of Christianity is only then perceived, when you try the system of the Gospel by a standard which you are supposed to have derived from natural religion. The argument which miracles and prophecies afford is but an inference from the power, wisdom, and holiness of God, all of which you assume as premises that are not disputed; and that complication of circumstances which constitutes the historical evidence for Christianity, derives its weight from those laws of probability which our experience and reflection suggest as the guide of our judgment. It is not easy to conceive that a creature, who is accustomed to exercise his reason upon every other subject, should be required to lay it aside upon a subject so interesting as the evidences of religion; and it is plain, that to substitute as the ground

of our faith certain impressions, the liveliness of which depends very much upon the state of the animal spirits, in place of the various exercises of reason which this subject calls forth, is to render that precarious and inexplicable which might rest upon sure principles, and to disregard the provision made by the author of our faith, who hath both commanded and enabled us to "be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us."

2. After the exercise of reason has established in our minds a firm belief that Christianity is of divine original, the second use of reason is to learn what are the truths revealed. As these truths are not in our days communicated to any by immediate inspiration, the knowledge of them is to be acquired only from books transmitted to us with satisfying evidence that they were written above seventeen hundred years ago, in a remote country, and a foreign language, under the direction of the Spirit of God. In order to attain the meaning of these books, we must study the language in which they were written, and we must study also the manners of the times, and the state of the countries in which the writers lived, because these are circumstances to which an original author is often alluding, and by which his phraseology is generally affected: we must lay together different passages in which the same word or phrase occurs, because without this labour we cannot ascertain its precise signification; and we must mark the difference of style and manner that characterizes different writers, because a right apprehension of their meaning often depends upon attention to this difference. All this supposes the application of grammar, history, geography, chronology, and criticism in matters of religion, *i. e.* it supposes that the reason of man had been previously exercised in pursuing these different branches of knowledge, and that our success in attaining the true sense of Scripture depends upon the diligence with which we avail ourselves of the progress that has been made in them. It is obvious that every Christian is not capable of making this application. But this is no argument against the use of reason of which we are now speaking. For they, who use translations and commentaries, only rely upon the reason of others, instead of exercising their own. The several

branches of knowledge, which I mentioned, have been applied in every age by some persons for the benefit of others; and the progress in sacred criticism, which distinguishes the present times, is nothing else but the continued application, in elucidating the Scriptures, of reason enlightened by every kind of subsidiary knowledge, and very much improved in this kind of exercise, by the employment which the ancient classics have given it since the revival of letters.

As the use of reason thus leads us into the meaning of the single words and phrases of Scripture, so it is equally necessary to enable us to attain a comprehensive view of the whole system of Scripture doctrine. Our Lord said to his apostles a little before his death, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The Spirit guided them into all truth after the ascension of their master; and their discourses and epistles are the fruit of that perfect teaching, which they had not been able to receive during his life. The epistles of Paul to the different churches refer to points which he had explained to the Christians when he was with them, or to questions which had arisen amongst them after his departure. They mention rather incidentally than formally the great truths of the Gospel: and there is no passage in them which can be considered as a complete delineation of all that we are called to believe. Yet the apostles speak of "the form of sound words," of "the truth as it is in Jesus," of "the faith once delivered to the saints," for which Christians ought to contend. The knowledge of this form of sound words, this truth and faith, we are left to attain by searching the Scriptures, by comparing the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, by employing expressions which are plain to illustrate those which are obscure, by giving such interpretations of the sacred writers as will preserve their consistency with themselves and with one another, by marking the consequences which are fairly deducible from their explicit declaration, and by framing, out of what is said and what is implied in their writings, a system that shall appear to be fully warranted by their authority. Without all this, we do not learn the revelation which is in the Gospel; and yet this implies some of the highest exercises of reason, sagacity,

investigation, comparison, abstraction; and it is the most important service which sound philosophy can render to Christianity, that it enables us by these exercises to attain a distinct and enlarged apprehension of the Gospel scheme in all its connexions and consequences. It is very true, that many pious Christians derive much consolation and improvement from the particular doctrines of Christianity, although the narrowness of their views, and the distraction of their thoughts, render it impossible for them to form a just and comprehensive view of the whole. But it is the professed object of those who propose to be teachers of Christianity to attain such a view. It is an object for which they are supposed to have leisure and opportunity; and unless they thus know the truth, they are not qualified to show that Christ is indeed "the power of God and the wisdom of God," or to defend the Gospel scheme against the objections, and rescue it from the abuses, to which a partial consideration has often given occasion.

3. After the two uses of reason that have been illustrated, a third comes to be mentioned, which may be considered as compounded of both. Reason is of eminent use in repelling the attacks of the adversaries of Christianity.

When men of erudition, of philosophical acuteness, and of accomplished taste, direct their talents against our religion, the cause is very much hurt by an unskilful defender. He cannot unravel their sophistry; he does not perceive the amount and the effect of the concessions which he makes to them; he is bewildered by their quotations, and he is often led by their artifice upon dangerous ground. In all ages of the church there have been weak defenders of Christianity; and the only triumphs of the enemies of our religion have arisen from their being able to expose the defects of those methods of defending the truth, which some of its advocates had unwarily chosen. A mind, trained to accurate philosophical views of the nature and the amount of evidence, enriched with historical knowledge, accustomed to throw out of a subject all that is minute and unrelated, to collect what is of importance within a short compass, and to form the comprehension of a whole, is the mind qualified to contend with

the learning, the wit, and the sophistry of infidelity. Many such minds have appeared in this honourable controversy during the course of this and the last century; and the success has corresponded to the completeness of the furniture with which they engaged in the combat. The Christian doctrine has been vindicated by their masterly exposition from various misrepresentations; the arguments for its divine original have been placed in their true light; and the attempts to confound the miracles and prophecies, upon which Christianity rests its claim, with the delusions of imposture, have been effectually repelled. Christianity has, in this way, received the most important advantages from the attacks of its enemies; and it is not improbable that its doctrines would never have been so thoroughly cleared from all the corruptions and subtleties which had attached to them in the progress of ages, nor the evidences of its truths have been so accurately understood, nor its peculiar character been so perfectly discriminated, had not the zea land abilities, which have been employed against it, called forth in its defence some of the most distinguished masters of reason. They brought into the service of Christianity the same weapons which had been drawn for her destruction, and, wielding them with confidence and skill in a good cause, became the successful champions of the truth.

I cannot speak of this third use of reason in matters of religion, without recommending to you an excellent book, in which you will find the advantage that Christianity has derived from it very fully illustrated. I mean Dissertations on the genius and evidences of Christianity, by Dr. Gerard, formerly Professor of Divinity in King's College, Aberdeen. All his works show Dr. Gerard to have been an acute distinguishing man. The observations in this book are very ingenious, and although there is in some of them an appearance of remoteness and research that is not perfectly agreeable, yet they are spread out at such length, and placed in so many different views, as to satisfy every reader not only that they are just, but that they add considerable weight to the collateral presumptive evidence of Christianity. The first part of the book is intended to show that the manner in which our Lord and his apostles proposed the evidences of Christianity was the most per-

fect. It is the second part which relates more directly to our present subject. Dr. Gerard entitled the second part, Christianity confirmed by the opposition of Infidels. He states the advantages which it derived from the opposition of early infidels, and then, with much useful reference to the present state of theological discussions, the advantages which it has derived from opposition in modern times, and the argument thence arising for its truth. The whole second part is the best illustration, that I can point out, of the use of reason in repelling the attacks of the adversaries of Christianity.

But while many of the champions of Christianity have adorned and illustrated that truth which they defended, you will find that others, by a licentious use of reason, have mutilated the Christian doctrine, and reduced it to little more than a system of morality. And therefore it becomes necessary to speak,

4. Of the fourth use of reason in judging of the truths of religion. The principles upon this subject are so simple and clear, that I shall be able to state them in a few words; and, although there has been very gross abuse of reason in judging of the truths of religion, it will not readily occur to you, how any person who understands the principles can fail essentially in the application of them. Every thing which is revealed by God comes to his creatures from so high an authority, that it may be rested in with perfect assurance as true. Nothing can be received by us as true which is contrary to the dictates of reason, because it is impossible for us to perceive at the same time the truth and the falsehood of a proposition. But many things are true which we do not fully comprehend, and many propositions, which appear incredible when they are first enunciated, are found, upon examination, such as our understanding can readily admit. These principles appear to me to embrace the whole of the subject, and they mark out the steps by which reason is to proceed in judging of the truths of religion. We first examine the evidences of revelation. If these satisfy our understandings, we are certain that there can be no contradiction between the doctrines of this true religion, and the dictates of right reason. If any such contradiction appear, there must be some mistake: by not making a

proper use of our reason in the interpretation of the Gospel, we suppose that it contains doctrines which it does not teach: or, we give the name of right reason to some narrow prejudices which deeper reflection and more enlarged knowledge will dissipate; or, we consider a proposition as implying a contradiction, when, in truth, it is only imperfectly understood. Here, as in every other case, mistakes are to be corrected by measuring back our steps. We must examine closely and impartially the meaning of those passages which appear to contain the doctrine: we must compare them with one another: we must endeavour to derive light from the general phraseology of Scripture and the analogy of faith; and we shall generally be able, in this way, to separate the doctrine from all those adventitious circumstances which give it the appearance of absurdity. If a doctrine, which, upon the closest examination, appears unquestionably to be taught in Scripture, still does not approve itself to our understanding, we must consider carefully what it is that prevents us from receiving it. There may be preconceived notions hastily taken up which that doctrine opposes; there may be pride of understanding that does not readily submit to the views which it communicates; or reason may need to be reminded, that we must expect to find in religion many things which we are not able to comprehend. One of the most important offices of reason is to recognise her own limits. She never can be moved by any authority to receive as true what she perceives to be absurd. But if she has formed a just estimate of the measure of human knowledge, she will not shelter her presumption in rejecting the truths of revelation under the pretence of contradictions that do not really exist; she will readily admit that there may be in a subject some points which she knows, and others of which she is ignorant; she will not allow her ignorance of the latter to shake the evidence of the former; but will yield a firm assent to that which she does understand, without presuming to deny what is beyond her comprehension. And thus availing herself of all the light which she now has, she will wait in humble hope for the time when a larger measure shall be imparted.

The importance, and indeed the meaning, of the principles which I have stated, would be best understood by

examples. But were I to attempt to exemplify them, I should anticipate the subjects upon which we are to enter. These principles will often recur in the progress of my Lectures upon the particular doctrines of Christianity; and therefore I shall content myself with having stated them in this general manner at present.

A right apprehension of this fourth use of reason in matters of religion constitutes the defence of Christianity against a large class of objections, that are often urged against some of its peculiar doctrines. You will find it therefore occasionally stated in all the writers who treat of these doctrines, and if there is a proper selection of your reading, just views upon this important subject will become familiar to your minds at the same time that you are studying the Scripture system. The best preparation for these views is sound logic, which, in teaching the right use of reason, ascertains its boundaries, and guards against the abuse of it. You bring that furniture with you when you enter upon the study of divinity. You improve it during the prosecution of that study, by reading Bacon, Locke, and Reid, and the other writers who treat of the intellectual powers, and by all those exercises, which render your own intellectual powers more sound and more acute, which increase their vigour, while they check their presumption. I would recommend to you particularly to read and study upon this subject, Reid's Essay on the Intellectual Powers, and five chapters of the 4th book of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, which treat of assent, reason, faith and reason, enthusiasm, wrong assent and error. They contain a most rational, and I think, when properly understood, a just view of reason in judging of the truths of religion; and every student ought to be well acquainted with them.

Potter, Prælectiones Theologicæ, vol. iii.
Randolph.

CHAP. VI.

CONTROVERSIES OCCASIONED BY THE SCRIPTURE SYSTEM.

THE last preliminary observation arising out of the general view of the Scripture system respects the controversies, to which that system has given occasion. Even those, who agreed as to the divine authority of the Christian religion, have differed very widely in their interpretation of its doctrines. These differences have not been confined to trifling matters, but have often touched upon points which are said to concern the very essence of the religion, and they who held the opposite opinions have discovered a mutual contempt and bitterness, very inconsistent with the spirit which might be supposed to animate the disciples of the same Master.

When we endeavour to account for the controversies in religion, we must begin with recollecting that there is hardly any subject of speculation, upon which those by whom it has been thoroughly canvassed have not differed in opinion. The degrees of understanding and the opportunities of improvement are so various, and there is such variety in the circumstances and connexions which direct men to their first opinions, and which insensibly warp their judgment, that the same subject is seldom viewed by two persons exactly in the same light. Minuter shades of difference are generally overlooked by those who agree in important points. But there are opinions so far removed from one another, that no explication of terms, no concessions which either side can make in consistency with their own principle, are sufficient to reconcile them. Hence the different systems which have been framed, and zealously maintained with regard to several branches of natural theology and pneumatics, with regard to the principles of morality, with regard to politics, I do not mean the politics of the day, but the general science of politics, and with regard to various questions in natural philosophy.

Any person who is conversant with the writings of the ancient and modern philosophers knows that without opposition of interest, merely from a difference in the mode of exercising the understanding upon subjects which appear to be within the reach of the human powers, controversies have been agitated ever since men began to speculate, and, after receiving the fullest discussion, have revived in a new form with fresh vigour.

But, notwithstanding this multiplicity of controversies, which the love of disputation has produced upon all other subjects, it may occur to you, that the authority, with which a messenger of heaven speaks, should put an end to all dispute with regard to the subjects of his mission, amongst those who acknowledge that he comes from God. You consider it as essential to a divine revelation, that all which is necessary to be known should there be delivered in explicit terms, and you think it impossible that any Christian should deny those propositions which are clearly contained in Scripture. A little attention, however, to the circumstances of the case will enable you to reconcile the existence of theological controversy with these principles.

The different parts of my discourse upon this subject are, from their nature, so blended together, that I shall not attempt to keep them asunder by separate heads. But the points to which I am to call your attention, as serving to account for the multiplicity of theological controversies, are these—the manner in which the truths of the Gospel are to be learned,—the nature and importance of these truths—the sentiments and passions, which, from the weakness of humanity, frequently operated in the breasts of persons who speculated concerning them—and the genius of that philosophy in which many of those persons were educated.

The truths of the Gospel must be deduced from an interpretation of the words of Scripture; and this interpretation admits of variety, according to the measure in which those who profess to interpret are acquainted with the language, the manners, and the phraseology of the writers, according to the attention which they bestow, and the honesty of mind with which they receive the truth. In the plainest language that can be used, there are metaphorical expressions which some may stretch too far, and others

may consider as not admitting of any direct application to the subject. In every discourse extending to a considerable length, there are limitations of general expressions, arising out of the occasion upon which they are used, that may be overlooked, or that may be perverted; and with regard to the Gospel in particular, there are pre-conceived opinions, which, by bending every proposition to a conformity with themselves, may lead men far from the truth, without their being conscious of showing any contempt of the authority of the revelation. These causes have operated even with regard to the meaning of the precepts of the Gospel, and have produced that casuistical morality, which, while it acknowledges Scripture as the standard of practice, has abounded in controversies concerning the application of that standard to particular cases.

But the controversies, with which you are chiefly concerned, respect not so much the practical parts of our religion as its doctrines; and you will not be surprised at the multiplicity of these, when you recollect the imperfect measure in which the Gospel has opened to the human mind new, interesting, and profound subjects of speculation. We found formerly, that, while the Gospel brings the most convincing evidence of the great facts in natural theology, it leaves all the intricate questions which have occurred concerning these facts just where they were; and that, while by revealing a new dispensation of Providence it necessarily mentioned the existence of persons not known by the religion of nature, their relation to us, and the conduct of that scheme in which they are engaged for our benefit, it has communicated only such information, with regard to this new set of facts that are to be received upon the authority of revelation, as is of real importance, leaving many points in darkness. Here is the most fruitful subject of controversy that can be conceived. The propositions revealed in Scripture are so few and simple, that it is hardly possible for those who rest in Scripture to disagree. But the pride of human wisdom does not readily submit to be confined within bounds so narrow. Those, who have been accustomed to speculate upon other subjects, continue their speculations upon religion, and, forgetting the proper province of reason with regard to truths that are revealed,

which is to receive with humility what does not appear upon examination to be absurd, they reject as unimportant every thing that reason did not investigate; or they endeavour, by means of reason, to carry their explanations and discoveries far beyond the measure of light contained in the Scripture; or they embarrass, by the terms and distinctions of human science, subjects so imperfectly revealed as not to admit of them. It cannot be expected that there should be uniformity in employments such as these, which do not proceed upon certain principles, and do not admit of being reduced to any fixed rule. When men of different modes of education, and different habits of thinking, undervaluing the simplicity of the facts revealed in Scripture, and desirous to be wise above what is written, carry their inquiries into the manner of these facts, they set out from different points, they wander without a guide in a boundless field of conjecture, and, having assumed their premises at pleasure, they arrive at opposite conclusions.

Even in the days of the apostles, "the form of sound words" which they delivered was complicated, and disguised by the prejudices of those who embraced it. The Jewish converts, retaining an implicit veneration for the teachers of the law, wished to incorporate with the Christian faith all the fables which they found in the writings of their Rabbins; and many of the heathen converts proceeded to canvass the subjects of revelation, with the presumptuous and inquisitive spirit of the philosophy which they had learned. Hence you read in the Epistles of Paul of "foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife;" of teachers "who, concerning the truth had erred, and overthrew the faith of some;" of "fables and endless genealogies;" and of "oppositions of science, falsely so called." We learn from Peter that the unlearned and unstable wrested some things in Paul's Epistles that are hard to be understood, and the other Scriptures also, to their own destruction: and it is a tradition from the earliest Christian writers, that John wrote both his first Epistle and his Gospel with a view to combat a heresy concerning our Lord's person, which attachment to the oriental philosophy had introduced amongst the first Christians. If controversy thus found a place in the church

even under the eye of the apostles, and was not effectually repressed by their explanation of their own words, and by their authority, you may expect that it would multiply fast after their departure, when the only standard of faith was the written word, and no person was entitled to impose his interpretation of that word as the true mind of the apostles. The same presumptuous curiosity, which had appeared in the earliest times, continued to extend to all the parts of Christian doctrine. Men speculated concerning the manner in which the Son and the Spirit exist with the Father. Instead of judging of the evidences of the divine mission of Jesus, they proceeded to scan the reasons of that dispensation which they were required to believe. They investigated the principles upon which the several parts of the dispensation combine in producing the end, and they pretended to ascertain the nature and the manner of their operation. They spread out the scanty information which Scripture affords upon all these subjects into large systems. But the original materials being very few, and the rest being supplied by imagination and false philosophy, the systems differed widely from one another, and it was impossible to find any method of reconciling the difference.

You will not suppose that these discussions proceeded in every instance purely from a desire of attaining the truth, or that they were conducted with the calm disinterested spirit which becomes a lover of knowledge. Any person, who has that acquaintance with human nature which history and experience afford, will not be surprised to find that other passions often mingled their influence with the pride of reason. Jealousy of a rival produced opposition to his opinions, so that some systems of theology grew out of a private quarrel. The vices of an individual needed some shelter, and he tried to find it in the zeal and ingenuity with which he brought forward speculations upon some of the points that were then universally interesting. The love of power induced some to stand forth as the leaders in theological controversy, whilst meaner desires dictated to others the station which they were to assume, and the humble offices by which they were to maintain the combat. Matters of order, ceremonies of worship, and all those usages in Christian societies, which

the word of God has left as matters of indifference to be regulated by human prudence, were laid hold of by artful men, who knew that they were of no essential importance, and placed in such a light as to be the most effectual means of inflaming the minds of the multitude. Some of the earliest and most violent controversies respected the time of celebrating Easter; and the history of the church abounds with others equally insignificant. By this mixture of more ignoble principles with the presumptuous curiosity that pried into those "secret things which belong to the Lord," theological subjects became one field for exhibiting the angry passions, which from the beginning of the world have disturbed the peace of society. Had that field been wanting, men would have found other pretexts for acting, from jealousy, ambition, and avarice; and many of the controversies of the Christian Church are, in one respect, a proof of that depravity of human nature, which, notwithstanding the remedy brought by the Gospel, continued to operate in the breasts of those who professed to receive that religion.

The number and intricacy of theological controversies were very much increased by the philosophy of the times. In the second century the philosophy of Plato was held in the highest admiration, and some of the learned Christians, having been educated in the schools of the later Platonists, retained the sentiments, and even the dress of philosophers, after they became the disciples of Christ. In the third century, Origen, who by the extent of his erudition, the intenseness of his application, and the vigour of his genius, was qualified to lead the minds, not of his contemporaries only, but of succeeding ages, was a professed Platonist. In his theological system he accommodates the whole scheme of Christian doctrine to the leading principles of Platonism; and in his interpretation of the Scriptures he adopts that allegorical and mystical method of exposition, to which the luxuriant fancy and the sublime imagery of the Athenian philosopher had given occasion, and the Platonic father was thus able to bring out of the simplicity of the Scriptures all the profound speculations which he wished to find there. Origen is generally regarded as the father of scholastic theology, which derives its name from applying the terms and dis-

tinctions of human science to the truths of revelation. Scholastic theology assumed different forms, corresponding to the succession of particular systems of philosophy. But during the whole period of its existence it maintained this general character, that it altered and corrupted the divine simplicity of the Gospel, and that, by affecting metaphysical precision upon subjects which the Scriptures have left undefined, it was productive of endless controversies. The progress of these controversies, which rendered it necessary for the opposite parties to entrench their opinions behind definitions, divisions, and terms of art, recommended to theologians the philosophy of Aristotle. The subtile distinguishing genius of Aristotle had invented a language peculiarly fitted to convey the discriminating tenets of their systems, and his authority had introduced and established the syllogistical mode of reasoning, a mode of no avail in making discovery, but of singular use in disputation, because it furnishes a kind of defensive weapons, which, by keeping an opponent at a distance, may, when skilfully managed, render it impossible for him to gain a victory. For these reasons, as well as for others, which it is not my province to explain, the Platonic philosophy yielded after a few centuries to the Peripatetic. The authority of Aristotle became as complete in the schools of theology as in those of logic or metaphysics; and all theological systems abounded so much with the barbarous jargon then in use, that we cannot at this day understand the opinions which were held upon intricate points of divinity without attempting to learn it. Upon all subjects this language served to conceal ignorance under an ostentatious parade of words. But when it is applied to those subjects which the wisdom of God hath seen meet to reveal in very imperfect measure, the number of clear ideas bears so very small a proportion to the multitude of words, that the study of it forms a very unprofitable waste of time; for it requires much labour to apprehend the meaning, and, unless your mind be so unhappily constituted as to remember words better than things, the meaning escapes almost as soon as it is attained.

Since the era of the Reformation the Aristotelian philosophy has been gradually sinking in the public esteem; and the human mind, having broken the fetters in which

she had long been bound, has freely canvassed all subjects connected with religion. While the ablest writers have appeared during the two last centuries in the deistical controversy, all the other controversies relating both to the doctrine, and to the rites or discipline of the Christian church, have called forth men of profound erudition and of philosophical minds. The same causes which we formerly mentioned have produced in modern times a difference of opinion, both with regard to those intricate questions in natural theology which the Gospel has not solved, and with regard to those new points, concerning which the information given in Scripture is by no means satisfying to the curiosity of man. A more rational criticism, than that used in ancient times, has been applied to the interpretation of Scripture. A more enlightened philosophy, a sounder logic, and a language less technical, but not deficient in precision, have been employed in supporting the different theological opinions which former habits of thinking, or the interpretation of Scripture, has led men to adopt. The most controverted points have been the subject of public national disputes, as well as of private inquiry. Churches are discriminated from one another by the system upon those points which enters into their creed; and individual members of every church, with that boldness of inquiry of which the Reformation set the example, have carried their researches into many points which most creeds had left undefined. The consequence of this thorough examination of the Scripture system has been, not that all the parts of it are understood, but that the measure in which they can be understood is known; every unnecessary degree of obscurity which had been attached to them is removed, and the limits of reason in judging of religion, together with the proper method of its being applied to that subject, are ascertained. The opponents in these controversies have corrected the errors of one another. The appeals which have been constantly made to Scripture, the diligence with which all the passages relating to every subject have been collected, and the ingenuity with which they have been applied in support of different systems, enable an impartial inquirer to attain the true meaning: and a student of divinity must be very much wanting to himself, if, after all

the labours of those who have gone before him, he does not acquire a distinct notion of the various opinions that have been entertained concerning the several parts of the Scripture system, and an apprehension of the train of argument by which every one of them is supported.

A review of the controversies forms a principal part of a course of theological lectures. We do not bring forward to the people all the variety of opinions which have been held by presumptuous inquirers, or superficial reasoners. To men who have not leisure to speculate upon religion, and who require the united force of all its doctrines to promote those practical purposes, which are of more essential importance than any other, it is much better to present "the form of sound words," as it was "once delivered to the saints," unembarrassed by human distinctions and oppositions of science, and to imprint upon their minds the consolation and "instruction in righteousness," which, when thus stated, it is well fitted to administer. This is the business of preaching. But this is not the only business of students of divinity. You are not masters of your profession, you are not qualified to defend the truth against the multiplicity of error, and your conceptions of the system of theology have not that enlargement and accuracy which they might have, unless you study the controverted points of divinity. It is true that there have been many disputes merely verbal; that there have been others that cannot be called verbal, the matter of which is wholly unimportant; and that perhaps all have been conducted with a degree of acrimony which the principles of Christian toleration, when thoroughly understood, will enable you to avoid. These general remarks will find their proper place after reviewing the particular controversies. But in that review you will meet with many which turn upon points so essential to the Christian faith, where the arguments upon both sides appear to have so much force, and have been urged in a manner so able, and so well fitted to enlighten the mind, that you will think it childish to affect to despise theological controversies in general, because there has been some impropriety in the manner of their being conducted, or because some of them are insignificant.

The time was when the decision of all theological con-

troversies turned upon a kind of traditional authority. The writers in the first four centuries of the Christian church were supposed to be much better acquainted with the mind of the apostles, and to have been in a more favourable situation for knowing the truth upon all difficult questions, than those who apply to the study of theology in later times. They were dignified with the name of the fathers. Their opinions were resorted to with a kind of reverence, which is not due to any human compositions. They were considered as the only sure interpreters of Scripture; and such confidence was reposed in their interpretation, that their works were sometimes placed very nearly upon a level with the inspired writings. The charm of human authority was dispelled by the Reformation. An accurate enlightened criticism has appreciated the merit of the Christian fathers. We allow them all the credit, which is due to honest men attesting facts that came within their own knowledge. We venerate their antiquity; we prize that knowledge of the early rites of the Christian church, and of the tradition of doctrine from the days of the apostles, which can be derived only from them. Above all, we consider their writings as an inestimable treasure upon this account, that by their mention of the books of the New Testament, and by the quotations from Scripture with which they abound, they are to us the vouchers of the authenticity of the sacred books, and of the manner in which the canon of Scripture was completed. But our sense of their merit, and of their importance to the Christian faith in the character of historians, does not induce us to submit to them as teachers. Without any invidious detraction, with every indulgence which the manners of the times and the imperfection of other early writers demand for the Christian fathers, Protestants adhere to their leading principle, which is this, to consider the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith. They have learned to call no man their master, because one is their Master, even Christ: and in interpreting the words of Christ and his apostles, they consider themselves as no less entitled to judge for themselves, and as, in some respects, no less qualified to form a sound judgment, than those who, living in earlier times, had prejudices and disadvantages from which we may be exempt. I cannot express this principle

better than in the words of our Confession of Faith:—"The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."

This is the principle to be followed in that review of the great controversies of religion, which forms a prominent subject of my lectures. I may often give you, from ancient writers, the history of opinions, and may occasionally combat those misrepresentations of that history which are found in modern authors, eager to call in every aid to support their particular systems. But I shall quote the Christian fathers as historians, not as authorities. I know no authority upon which you ought to rest in judging of the truth of any doctrine but the Scriptures, and therefore I consider sacred criticism as the most important branch of the study of theology. We are to avail ourselves of an intimate acquaintance with the language of the New Testament, *i. e.* with the meaning of single words, with the usual acceptation of phrases, and with the real amount of figurative expression. We are to study the general customs of the people amongst whom that language was used, and the habits of thinking which might dictate a particular phraseology to some writers. We are to investigate the mind of an author, by comparing his language in one place with that which occurs in another, and we are to endeavour to attain a full and precise conception of the whole doctrine of Scripture upon every point, by laying together those passages of Scripture in which it is stated under different views.

It is by this patient exercise of reason and criticism that a student of divinity is emancipated from all subjection to the opinions of men, and led most certainly into the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It is the great object of my lectures to assist you in this exercise, and I may hope, after having bestowed much pains in going before you, to be of some use in abridging your labour, by pointing out the shortest and most successful method of arriving at the conclusion. I shall not decline giving my opinion upon the passages which I quote, and the comparison of Scrip-

ture which I shall often make. But I do not desire you to pay more regard to my opinions than to those of any other writer, unless in so far as they appear to you upon examination to be well founded. You will derive more benefit from canvassing what I say than from imbibing all that I can teach; and the most useful lessons which you can learn from me are a habit of attention, a love of truth, and a spirit of inquiry.

CHAP. VII.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE COURSE.

Our Shorter Catechism, and our Confession of Faith, are formed upon the course in which systems of divinity commonly proceed, and both of them are clear and well digested. You will find another excellent abridgment of the ordinary course in Marckii Medulla *Theologiæ*, a duodecimo of 300 pages, which used to be the text book in St. Mary's College, and which, in my opinion, ought to be read by every student of divinity, not early, but before he finishes his studies. You will see in this little book all the controversies that have been agitated. But you will see them in the order of the system, and the order is this. After a general account of the nature of theology, and of the Scriptures as the principle of theology, the following subjects succeed one another. God and the Trinity—the decrees of God—the execution of these decrees in the works of Creation—a view of the visible and invisible world—the Providence and government which God exercises over his works—man—the state of innocence—the fall—the consequences of sin—the covenant of grace—the person, offices, and state of the Mediator of the covenant—the benefits of the covenant—the duties of those who partake of the benefits—the sacraments—the Church—the final condition of mankind.

Upon all these subjects, the orthodox doctrine is stated, and the objections that have been made to the several parts of the doctrine are answered, so that every chapter contains an account of the several opinions, that have been held upon all the points that occur in the chapter. I was afraid to entangle myself in this course, partly from an apprehension, proceeding both upon the number of subjects which it embraces, and upon the experience of other professors of divinity who have engaged in it, that it was likely to stretch out to such a length, as to leave me no hope of finishing my lectures during the longest term of

attendance which the law prescribes to students; and partly from an opinion that the arrangement adopted in the ordinary course is not the most perfect. You will not think this opinion ill founded, when you come to read Marckii Medulla; for there, and I believe in every other of the common systems, there is so close an alliance between the subjects treated under the different heads, that the same principles are frequently resorted to in order to illustrate the orthodox doctrine; objections, the same in substance with those that had been answered in a former chapter, recur under a different form, and the same answers are repeated with only a little variation in the manner of applying them. I am very far from condemning this arrangement as in all respects improper. It was adopted by very able men; it is most useful for giving a thorough acquaintance with all the parts of the Scripture system; and there is one book in which it appears to such advantage, that what I account its imperfection is almost forgotten, I mean Calvin's Institutes of the Christian religion; a book written in Latin, that is not only perpicuous, but elegant, and giving a most masterly comprehensive view of the great points of theology. It consists of four books. The first is entitled, De Cognitione Dei Creatoris. The second, De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris. The third, De Modo Percipiendæ Christi gratiæ, et qui fructus inde nobis proveniant, et qui effectus consequantur. The fourth, De Externis Mediis ad Salutem. It requires much time to read this book carefully; but when a student has leisure to make it his business, he will find his labour abundantly recompensed; and I do not know a more useful book for a clergyman in the country. It may be purchased for a trifle, and it is the best body of divinity. But excellent and profitable as this book is, the imperfection which I mentioned adheres to the plan upon which it is composed; and although the order of Calvin's Institutes appears to me simpler and more natural than that of any other system which I have read, yet I think that, if I were to attempt to follow it, I should be reminded by frequent repetitions, that a more perfect arrangement might have rendered the course shorter and less fatiguing.

This impression, led me to attend to another arrange-

ment of the controversies, which has been executed with much ability by some theological writers. Every controversy is stated by itself; *i. e.* all the distinguishing opinions of those, who derive a particular name from the peculiarity of their tenets, are brought into one view, and are referred to one general principle, so that you see the system of their creed, and can mark the connexion between the several parts. To give an example: Socinianism is the system of those who hold the opinions of Socinus. The principle of Socinianism is, that man may be saved by that religion, which is founded upon the relation between God the Creator, and man his creature. From this principle flow their opinions with regard to the intention of Christ's death as a witness to the truth, and an example to his followers, but not as an atonement for sin; their exclusion of mysteries from religion; and all the tenets by which they transform the Christian religion into the most perfect system of morality. The principle of Pelagianism, or of those who hold the opinions of Pelagius, is this, that the natural powers of man since the fall are sufficient to enable him to keep the law of God. From this principle flow the opinions of the Pelagians concerning original sin, the decrees of God, the influences of the Spirit, and the measure of perfection which may be attained upon earth.

This method of arranging the controversies is manifestly much more scientific than the former. In every set of opinions which deserves the name of a system, there are some leading principles which connect the several parts. It is an agreeable exercise of the understanding to trace these principles, and to mark that kind of unity and subordination which arises from their influence. It is an act of justice in those who examine the opinions of others, to take into view that mutual dependence which renders them a consistent whole; and it is an endless unavailing task to attempt to defend the truth against a multitude of detached errors, unless your reasoning reach the sources from which these errors proceed. I recommend it, therefore, to those students who, in the course of their reading, have attained an intimate acquaintance both with the evidences of Christianity and with the particular doctrines of our faith, to study the most important controversies in this scientific manner. You will derive much assistance in this branch

of your researches from Mosheim's Church History, which is an invaluable treasure of theological knowledge. This most learned and ingenious author, who, when read along with the able and judicious notes of his translator Maclaine, is in almost every instance a safe guide, has given, in one division of his work, a summary of all the heresies or particular opinions that were held in the different ages of the Church. He has traced their rise and their progress, and has discriminated, with critical acumen, those which appear to an ordinary eye almost the same. As his work, from its nature, makes mention of all the controversies, both those which are important and those which are trifling, you cannot expect that even the opinions, upon which he has judged it proper to bestow the most particular attention, will be fully elucidated in a book which comprehends such an extent of time, and such a variety of matter. You will supply this unavoidable defect by the books which Mosheim quotes in his notes, or which I recommend: and from the general index which he furnishes, and the treatises which professedly explain the particular subjects, you will be able to form a distinct connected view of every one of the five controversies which are universally interesting, and which are commonly known by the names of Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and the Popish controversy. There are many other controversies that turn upon very important points. But they have not been so perfectly digested into the form of a system as the five now mentioned, nor have they been defended with such ability as to occupy a great part of the attention of a student.

Although I thus earnestly recommend attention to the scientifical arrangement of the controversies, I have been restrained from adopting it as the plan of my course by the following reasons. Some of the five great controversies resemble one another in several points. Thus Pelagianism and Arminianism both turn upon the natural powers which man has, since the fall, to obey the will of God. Socinianism agrees with Pelagianism upon this point, and it agrees with Arianism in denying that Jesus is truly God, while it differs from Arianism in the account which it gives of his person. You may judge from this specimen, that although the scientifical method, which I mentioned, is unquestionably the best for making you acquainted with any

particular system of opinions, yet to us, who mean to review all the most important controverted points, it would necessarily be attended with much repetition. We should often meet, under different names, with the same objections, and the same heretical opinions, and we should be obliged to bring forward the same arguments and the same passages of Scripture in answer to them. Further, our object is not so much to know who held the particular opinions, and what was the age in which they lived; but what were the various opinions upon the great subjects of theology, and what were the grounds upon which they rested. We may attain this object, although we confound the shades of difference between systems that nearly approach, and therefore to us it were a needless waste of research and of time to discriminate them nicely. Further still, as every one of the five great controversies embraces particular opinions upon many different points, the arranging the five separately breaks the subjects of theology into parts, and does not afford a full united view of any one subject. You will understand what I mean from an example. Besides the opinions of the early ages concerning the person of Christ, one opinion was held in the third century by Arius, another at a much later period by Socinus, and a third has been the general doctrine of the Christian church. Any one who wishes to make himself master of this interesting subject will desire to see the different opinions brought together, that he may compare their probability, that he may judge of the support which every one of them receives from particular passages of Scripture, or from the analogy of faith, and may thus attain a conclusion which he can defend by good reasons. Had you a book continually by you, in which all the controversies were arranged singly, you might make a collation of the different opinions upon the same subject, by reading first a part of Arianism, then the corresponding part of Socinianism, and next the corresponding part of that system which is called Orthodox, in the same manner as you get a full view of a siege in the Peloponnesian war, by passing directly from the portion of the siege which is written in one book of the history of Thucydides, to the portion of the same siege which is writen in another book. But you could not make this collation in hearing a course of lectures, unless I repeated

under one controversy as much of what I had said under the corresponding part of another, as to bring it to your mind; and this repetition would be a proof that the arrangement, however favourable to your understanding any one system of opinions, is unfavourable to your understanding the whole controverted subject.

Once more, there is in the different opinions upon the same subject a progress that may be traced, by which you see how one paved the way for the other; and the succeeding opinion is often illustrated by the preparation which had been made for its reception. This advantage is lost, when you throw together the different subjects that were agitated in one system of opinions. You see, in this way, the chain which binds together all the parts of Pelagianism, Arminianism, or Socinianism. But in passing along the chain, you miss the thread which conducts you from the opinions on a particular subject found under one system, to the opinions on the same subject found under another.

For these reasons, I resolved neither to follow the path of the ordinary systems of theology, nor to adopt the more scientific mode of classing the opinions that distinguish different sects of Christians. The plan of my course is this:

Out of the mass of matter that is found in the system, I select the great subjects which have agitated and divided the minds of those who profess to build their faith upon the same Scriptures. I consider every one of these subjects separately; I present the whole train and progress of opinions that have been held concerning it; and I state the grounds upon which they rest, passing slightly over those opinions which are now forgotten, or whose extravagance prevents any danger of their being revived, and dwelling upon those whose plausibility gave them at any time a general possession of the minds of men, or which still retain their influence and credit amongst some denominations of Christians.

In selecting the great subjects to be thus brought forward, I was guided by that general view of the Gospel which was formerly illustrated. We found its distinguishing character to be the religion of sinners,—a remedy for the present state of moral evil, provided by the love of God the Father, brought into the world by Jesus Christ,

and applied by the influences of the Spirit. All the controversies which are scattered through the ordinary systems, and which have been classed under the different heads, Arianism, Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Socinianism, respect either the Persons by whom the remedy is brought and applied, or the remedy itself. The different opinions respecting the Persons comprehend the whole of the Arian, a part of the Socinian, and all that is commonly called the Trinitarian controversy, upon which so much has been written since the beginning of the last century. The different opinions concerning the remedy itself respect either the nature of the remedy, the extent of the remedy, or the application of it; and they comprehend the whole system of Pelagian and Arminian principles, a part of the Socinian, and many of the doctrines of Popery. Opinions as to the nature of the remedy depend upon the apprehensions entertained of the nature of the disease; so that all the questions concerning original sin, the demerit of sin, and the manner in which guilt can be expiated, fall under this head. Opinions as to the extent of the remedy embrace the questions concerning universal and particular redemption, and concerning the decrees of God. Opinions as to the application of the remedy turn upon the necessity of divine assistance, the manner in which it is bestowed and received, and the effects which it produces upon the mind and the conduct of those to whom it is given.

It appears to me, therefore, that by this distribution we do not omit any of the great controversies, with which students of divinity ought to be acquainted; at the same time, by tracing with undistracted attention the progress of opinions upon every subject, by viewing their points of opposition, and examining their respective merits, we consider one subject closely upon all sides before we proceed to another, and are thus saved the necessity of returning at any future period upon the ground which we had formerly trodden. Much light will probably be struck from this collision of different opinions. You have experience that you are never so thoroughly acquainted with a subject, as when you have heard the discussion of the several questions to which it gives rise, either in conversation, or in more formal debate; and therefore you have reason to expect that your knowledge of theology will be

rendered much more accurate and profound, by canvassing the different opinions held in a succession of ages by very able men, and defended by them with a zeal that cannot be supposed to have omitted any argument, because it was dictated not only by the love of truth, but in many instances by the desire of victory.

After I have derived all the benefit which the labours of these men can afford, in opening to you those doctrines of Christianity which are the great subject of your studies, I next consider the church of Christ as a society founded by its Author. This branch of our course entered into the general view of the Scripture system; and it demands your particular attention, not only from the mention made of it in Scripture, but also from the many violent controversies to which it has given birth. The notion of a society implies the use of certain external observances, which are necessary to distinguish it from other societies, and to maintain order amongst the members. It is natural, therefore, in speaking of the Christian society, to give a history of church government, or an account of the various practices and questions which have occurred upon this head; and in this account I am led to investigate the grounds of that claim advanced by the Bishop of Rome, as the Head of the church, and the Vicar of Christ upon earth. There are many of the doctrines of the church of Rome, which fall under some of the controversies that we propose to review. But these doctrines were only called in as auxiliaries of the hierarchy, to lend their aid in supporting that system of spiritual power, of which the claim made by the Bishop of Rome was the principal pillar; so that by much the greater part of the Popish controversy belongs to the head of church government.

It is impossible, in this country, to consider Church government without bestowing attention upon the claims of Episcopacy and Presbytery. After examining the support which they derive from the word of God, and from the practice of antiquity, the transition is natural to the constitution of that Church, of which you expect to become members. The Church of Scotland, like every other established Church, requires her office-bearers to subscribe a declaration of their faith. It is proper, therefore, to consider the right upon which such a requisition rests, and the

propriety of that right being exercised. The peculiar doctrines contained in that declaration, which we call the Confession of Faith, will have passed in review before we come to this part of our course. But it will be proper that you attend to the reason of the peculiarities of that worship, in which you may soon be called to preside, and to the principles of that discipline and government, of which you may soon be called to be the guardians and the administrators.

The different parts of the office of a parish minister are familiar to those who live in this country, where they are not neglected. But some observations, with regard to the importance of performing them properly, and the manner in which they may be rendered most useful, will not appear unseasonable to those who are about to enter upon the office of the ministry; and there is one branch of that office, I mean the preparation and the delivery of sermons, concerning which, after all that you have heard of composition elsewhere, you will naturally expect some practical rules in a place where your own discourses, the legal specimen of your proficiency in the study of theology, are exhibited and judged.

When I have filled up this plan to my own satisfaction, I shall think that I discharge that part of the public duties of my station which consists in lecturing, by contributing the whole stock of my information and experience for your advantage. My principle is to condense the execution of the plan as much as possible. I shall be disappointed, if I be not able to comprise my whole course in such a period as will give to every residing student of divinity an opportunity, if he chooses, of hearing all the parts of it; and I shall think it an advantage, if, by omitting some parts, and abridging others, I can so reduce the course, as to admit of passing over it twice, in the time prescribed for regular attendance at college.

Turretin, abridged by Russenius, is a very useful book for giving a short view of all the controverted points.

Stapferi Instit. Theol. Polemicæ, in 5 vols. is a valuable work. The different systems of opinions concerning the truths of religion are there separately arranged.

BOOK III.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE SON, THE SPIRIT, AND THE MANNER OF THEIR BEING UNITED WITH THE FATHER.

THE Gospel reveals two persons, whose existence was not known by the light of nature; the Son, by whom the remedy offered in the Gospel was brought into the world, and the Spirit, by whom it is applied. The revelation concerning the first of these persons is much more full than that concerning the second, and has given occasion to a greater variety of opinions. I shall begin therefore with stating the opinions concerning the Son; I shall next give a short view of the opinions concerning the Spirit; after which, there will remain a general subject, arising, as we shall find, out of the illustration of these separate branches; and, in speaking of this, I shall have to state the opinions respecting the manner in which these two persons are united with the Father.

CHAP. I.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PERSON OF THE SON.

IN entering upon the opinions concerning the person of the Son, I must warn you not to consider the subject as unimportant. It is the language of Dr. Priestley, that the value of the Gospel does not, in any degree, depend upon the idea which we may entertain concerning the person of

Christ, because all that is truly interesting to us, is the object of his mission, and the authority with which his doctrine is promulgated. But this language is inconsistent with the general strain of the New Testament, a great part of which we shall find occupied in giving us just conceptions of the person of Christ: It is inconsistent with the general sentiments of the Christian Church, who have canvassed this subject with much diligence, and with deep interest, ever since the Gospel appeared: It is inconsistent with the zeal which Dr. Priestley and his associates have discovered in communicating their opinions upon this subject to the world; and it is inconsistent with the natural propensity to which the Scriptures have graciously accommodated themselves, and by which every one is led to connect the importance of a message with the dignity of the messenger. It does not become any one to suppose, that the discoveries made in the Gospel concerning the person of Christ contain merely a popular argument, to which it is unnecessary for him to attend. But it becomes every person, who believes that the message proceeds from heaven, to receive with reverence the discoveries concerning the messenger, as conveying important truth, which claims the attention of every understanding to which it is made known, and creates duties which a Christian ought not to neglect.

With this impression of the importance of the subject, I proceed to analyse the opinions concerning the Person of Christ. I do not propose to follow the order of *time*, because there is some difficulty in ascertaining the dates of particular opinions, because the order in which they arose is not always very material, and because the frequent revival of old opinions in new systems would render a chronology of them full of repetitions. Neither do I propose to fatigue your attention with the useless uninteresting detail of all the extravagant conceits broached by particular men, or of the minute shades of difference among those who agreed in their general system. I shall furnish you with the information that is of real importance, by bringing forward the three great systems upon this subject. Their features are strongly marked and clearly discriminated, and they appear to comprehend all the variety of which the subject admits, because the several opinions

which have at some times been exploded and at other times revived, are always reducible to one or other of these three systems.

The simplest opinion concerning the person of Christ is that he was merely a man who had no existence before he was born of Mary; who was distinguished from the former messengers of heaven, not by any thing more sacred in his original character, but by the virtues of his life, and by the extraordinary powers with which, upon account of the peculiar importance of his commission, he was invested; who, after he had executed this commission with fidelity, with fortitude, and zeal, was rewarded for his obedience to God, his good-will to men, and his patience under suffering, by being raised from the dead, and exalted to the highest honour, being constituted at his resurrection the Lord of the creation, and entering at that time into a kingdom which is to continue to the end of the world, and the administration of which entitles him to reverence and submission from the human race. Some who held this general system admitted that Jesus was born in a miraculous manner of a virgin; while others contend that he was literally the son of Joseph and Mary. Some said that Jesus might be worshipped upon account of the dominion to which he is raised; while others, who allow that gratitude and honour are due to him, confine adoration to the Father. But these two differences do not affect the general principle of the system. In whatsoever manner Jesus came into the world, he is, according to this system, ψιλος ανθρωπος, a mere man; and whether reverence in general, or that particular expression of reverence that is called adoration, be considered as due to him, it is not upon account of any essential property of his nature, but upon account of a dominion that was given him by God.

The grounds upon which this opinion rests are, the general strain of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which Jesus is foretold as the seed of the woman; the general strain of the New Testament, in which our Lord speaks of himself, and his apostles speak of him, as a man; the accounts of his birth, his childhood, his sufferings, and his giving up the ghost; and the manner in which the Scriptures frequently state his glory as the recompense of what he did upon earth. The argument drawn from this

language of Scripture is supported by general reasonings concerning the fitness of employing a man, whose life is a pattern which we may be supposed capable of imitating, and whose resurrection and exaltation furnish an encouragement, suited to the condition of those who encounter hardships the same in kind with those which he overcame: and this argument is defended by attempts to explain away such passages of Scripture as seem to contradict the system, and particularly by referring every thing that is said of the glory of Christ to that power which was given him upon earth, or to that state of exaltation which he now holds in heaven.

It is said that this opinion was held in the first century by a small sect of Jewish converts, called the Ebionites, who received no other part of the canon of the New Testament but the Gospel according to Matthew, after rejecting the first two chapters. The opinion was openly taught by Theodotus and Artemon, about the end of the second century; and Eusebius says that Theodotus was the first who taught the simple humanity of Christ.* It may be traced also in other systems that divided the Christian church before the Council of Nice, which met in the beginning of the fourth century. But after that Council, this opinion appears to have been exploded till the time of the Reformation, when it was revived by Socinus, and propagated among his disciples, who abounded in Transylvania, Hungary, and Poland. It continues to form one of the leading characteristical features of those who are called Socinians. It was insinuated with modesty and diffidence by some eminent men in the course of the last century, amongst whom is Lardner, who has deserved so well of the Christian world by that laborious and valuable collection entitled the Credibility of the Gospel History. It has of late been published with zeal and confidence by Lindsey, Priestley, and their associates; and it is the avowed principle of those Socinians who choose to distinguish themselves by the title of Unitarians.

The second opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that he was not a mere man, but that he existed before he appeared upon earth. It occurs to mention under this

* Eus. Hist. Ecc. lib. v.

second opinion one branch of the tenets of the Gnostics, those heretics who began, even in the days of the apostles, to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel by a mixture of oriental philosophy. They held that the Christ was an emanation from the Supreme Mind, one of those beings whom they considered as filling the pleroma, and to whom they gave the name of Æons. This glorious Æon, who was sent by the Supreme Being to the earth, according to some of the Gnostics, united himself to the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him at his crucifixion; according to others, he only assumed the appearance of a man; so that the body which the Jews saw, and which they thought they crucified, was a shadowy form that eluded their malice. Hence this latter class of Gnostics was called by the ancient fathers Docetæ, from δοκεω, *videor*, as they ascribed a seeming, not a real body to Jesus. It were endless to follow all the differences of opinion concerning the person of Christ among those who held the Gnostic principles; because as the principles were merely the fruit of imagination, resting upon no solid ground either in reason or in revelation, they admitted of infinite variety. A sounder philosophy has exploded these abuses of fancy, and given human speculations a more useful direction, so that the whole system of Gnostic principles is now an object of study, only in so far as some acquaintance with it is necessary to throw light upon those parts of the sacred writings in which it is attacked. Mosheim has delineated that system in his Church History with great ingenuity and learning, with more minuteness in some instances, than it appears to deserve, and with as much precision and clearness as its obscure airy form admitted. You will learn from him all that needs to be known upon this subject; and you will find that almost all the Gnostic sects considered Jesus as dignified and animated by some kind of union with a celestial Æon, who had existed in the pleroma before he descended to earth. *

It is of more importance to fix your attention upon the substantial definite form which the second opinion concerning the person of Christ, I mean that which raised him above man by ascribing to him pre-existence, assumed

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. II. Part II. ch. V.

in the system of Arius. It was the leading principle of this system, that the Christ, the first and most exalted of the creatures of God, existed before the rest were created, and is not like any thing else that was made. I call this the characteristical principle of Arianism; because, whatever traces of it some have pretended to discover in more ancient writers, Arius is universally allowed to be the first who taught it systematically; and this principle was the opinion for which he was condemned by the council of Nice in the beginning of the fourth century. The writings of Arius, in which he unfolded and defended his system, were burnt by the authority which condemned his opinions. But a few of his epistles, the creed which he gave in to Constantine, and the sentence pronounced against him by the council of Nice, are extant; from a comparison of which, a candid inquirer may attain a clear conception of the outlines of his system. His system was this—the one Eternal God, the source of all being and power, did, in the beginning, before any thing was made, produce by his own will a most perfect Creature, to whom he communicated a large measure of glory and power. By this Creature, God made the worlds, all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, so that he alone proceeded immediately from God, while all other creatures not only existed after him, but were called into being by his instrumentality, and placed by the Father under his administration. Having been the Creator of the first man, he was from the beginning the medium of all divine communication with the human race. He appeared to the patriarchs; he spake by the prophets, and in the fulness of time he was incarnate, *i. e.* clothed with that body, which, by the immediate operation of God, was formed out of the Virgin Mary; and thus, according to the Arian system, the man Christ Jesus had a real body, like his brethren. But that body, instead of being animated by a human soul, was informed by the super-angelical spirit, who had been with God from the beginning, who condescended to leave that glory, partook in the sorrow and agony which filled up the life of Jesus, and in recompense of this humiliation and obedience was exalted to be the Saviour, the Sovereign, and the Judge of mankind.

Arius professed to have received this faith from the

Gospel, and to hold the sense of the Scriptures; and he might suppose that his system reconciled those passages which speak of the dignity and eternity of the Son of God, with those which seem to imply an inferiority to the Father. It appeared to him, that this first creature, upon account of the super-eminent glory and power communicated to him, might without impropriety be called the only begotten Son of God, and God; and he admitted that this creature was in one sense eternal, because he proceeded from God before the existence of those measures of time, which arise from the motion and succession of created objects. He thought himself at liberty, therefore, to hold this language in his creed, "We believe in one God, the "Father Almighty, and in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, "who was made by him, begotten before all ages, God "the Word, by whom all things were made in heaven and "in earth." But although all these expressions, except one, "who was made by him," might have been used by those who held the received opinions, there were three points in his system which were condemned by the council. He said of the Son, ην ποτε ὁτε ουκ ην—πριν γεννηθηναι ουκ ην—and ἐξ ουκ οντων εγενετο. The meaning of the three points upon which he was condemned was this. Although Arius carried back the existence of the Son before all worlds, and so before all times, yet it was possible, according to his system, to conceive some point from whence that existence commenced. The Son had no existence till the act of the Father produced him, and he was produced, not out of the substance of the Father, but like other creatures, out of nothing. We suffer persecution, says Arius in one of his epistles, because we have said, the Son hath a beginning, but God hath no beginning, and because we have asserted that the Son is out of nothing.* This opinion was opposed by the authority of successive councils, and by the decrees of the Roman Emperors, who had by this time embraced Christianity, and those by whom it was avowed were exposed to contumely and barbarity. Before the end of the fourth century it was extirpated in the greater part of the Roman empire, and appears to have been so much forgotten, that all the Divines who wrote

* K. λ. apud Epiph. H. 69. N. vi.

upon this subject after that period till the Reformation, were almost wholly employed, not in explaining or combating the Arian system, but in proposing different modifications of that which I am to state as the third opinion concerning the person of Christ. The opinion of Arius revived in the seventeenth century, when the progress of the Reformation allowed greater liberty in religious speculation; and, although it be contrary, not only to the confessions of the established churches of Great Britain, but to the laws of the land, it has appeared with little disguise in many able treatises, and was held, with certain qualifications, by some of the most eminent divines in the last century.

The third opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that from all eternity he was God. Neither the Socinians nor the Arians deny that the name God is ascribed to him. But as, according to their systems, the only foundation of that name is the degree of glory and dominion with which he was invested at an earlier or a later period, and as the same will, which thus freely distinguished him above the other creatures, may remove the distinction when the purposes of it are accomplished, it is manifestly implied in these systems, that Christ has a dependence upon the will of another, and a possibility of change, which require that the word of God, when applied to the Son, be understood in a sense very different from that in which it is applied to Him who from everlasting to everlasting *is* God. Although therefore the three opinions coincide in the use of the same name, the third is essentially distinguished from the second as well as from the first in this point, that according to it Christ eternally and necessarily co-existed with God. All the perfections of the divine nature belong to him essentially; no past time can be conceived in which he did not possess them, and no time shall arrive hereafter in which any of them can be separated from him.

There has been much controversy whether this was the general opinion of the Christian church before the council of Nice. Petavius, a learned Jesuit, in his immense work, entitled Dogmata Theologica, has laboured to show, that the Fathers of the first three centuries inclined to Arianism, and have in many places spoken of Christ as an inferior God. Bishop Bull, who wrote in the seventeenth

century, and is by much the ablest defender of this third opinion, has rendered it, in my opinion, more than probable that Petavius gives a false representation of those who are called the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and that, although upon many occasions they express themselves loosely and inaccurately, yet it was the constant opinion of the most respectable writers in the first three centuries, that Christ was from eternity God. But the truth is, this controversy concerning the opinion of the Ante-Nicene Fathers has derived more importance from the labour and zeal with which it has been agitated than it deserves. For the question does not depend upon human authority; and in whatever manner ancient writers have expressed themselves upon this subject, the truth remains the same. Even although Dr. Priestley could establish the position which he has maintained in other smaller treatises, and in a great work of four octavo volumes, entitled, the History of Early Opinions concerning the Person of Christ, that the Christian church from the earliest times was in general what he calls Unitarian, and that the Godhead of the Son, in the proper sense of the word, was unknown to the great body of Christians, and is found only occasionally mentioned in the works of a few authors; still the matter rests upon its original ground, and the question recurs, which of the three opinions concerning the person of Christ is most agreeable to the revelation made in Scripture on that subject. We derive from the study of the ancient Christian writers the history of the progress of theological opinions: we may learn the manner in which very able men, who bestowed their whole attention upon theological subjects, illustrated and defended the opinions which they held, and we may thus be assisted in understanding the truth, and directed where to find the proper arguments in support of it. But these arguments must ultimately be drawn from Scripture, and Dr. Clarke, however persons may differ as to the merits of his system, of which I shall have occasion to speak afterwards, must be allowed to have suggested the only proper method of attaining the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, by collecting all the texts in which there is any mention of that doctrine. You will understand, then, that when at any time I quote the sayings of ancient or respectable Christian writers, I quote them as

evidences of what their opinion was, not as proofs that that opinion was true; and you will agree with me in thinking, that I should very much mispend your time, if I entered into a minute investigation of those passages in their works which appear to be contradictory, and followed the labours of many modern authors in thus endeavouring to ascertain what were the sentiments of Tertullian, Eusebius, or Origen.

But while we disclaim every kind of submission to the authority of the Fathers, there are expressions which recur frequently in their writings so marked and significant, that they deserve to be brought forward, as they may assist you in understanding what the third opinion concerning the person of Christ truly is. The Ante-Nicene Fathers often speak of the kindling of one light by another, as the image which most fitly expresses the generation of the Son from the Father, because in this case there is no separation or difference of kind. The original light remains undiminished, and that which is kindled appears to be the same. They say, that as the sun in the heavens cannot exist without emitting light, as no interval can be conceived between the existence of the sun and the emission of his rays, so Christ always existed with God; and they argue the eternity of Christ from his being the wisdom, the reason, what the Greek writers called the λογος of the Father. The words of Athanasius, the great antagonist of Arius, are these, ὡν, Θεος. εξ αὐτου και ουτατον λογον εχει· και ουτε ὁ λογος επιγεγονεν ουκ ων προτερον, ουτε ὁ πατηρ αλογος ην ποτε.* The meaning of these, and other similitudes, with which the Ante-Nicene Fathers abound, was precisely ascertained by that word which the council of Nice adopted in opposition to the opinion of Arius. They said that the Son is ὁμοουσιος with the Father. This word the Arians could not, in consistency with their principles, admit into their confession. They held that the Son was produced immediately by the Father out of nothing. But they saw that, if he be of the same substance with God, he is God, and that if he is God, he cannot have a temporary precarious existence, but must have always been with the Father what he now is. This word therefore became the mark of distinction between the

* Athanas. Orat. passim.

second and the third opinions concerning the person of Christ, and the precise amount of ὁμοούσιος when applied to the Son is this, that although it be implied in the name of the Son, that he proceeded from the Father, and although, in reference to his proceeding from God, he be called the only begotten of the Father, yet the essential glory and perfections of the Father and the Son are the same.

It is further to be stated, that while the Socinians believed the Christ to be a mere man, in whom an extraordinary measure of the power of God dwelt, while the Arians believed that the Christ was composed of a super-angelical spirit and a human body, those who hold the third opinion believe that Christ assumed, at the incarnation, the complete human nature into union with the divine; in other words, that the body of Christ was animated by a human soul, and this soul was so united with the Godhead that the divine and human nature formed one person.

I enter not at present into the grounds of this third opinion. I mean only to state what it is, and in order to assist your apprehension of both parts of it, I shall recite to you a part of the Nicene Creed, by which this third opinion was more clearly defined than it had been before, and those parts of the confessions of the two established churches in Britain, by which it appears that both of them have adopted the third opinion concerning the person of Christ. The words of the Nicene Creed, translated literally from the Greek, are these: "We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things were made both in heaven and in earth, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down, and was incarnate, being made man." The second of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England is in these words: "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect

natures, that is to say, the godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." The words of our Confession of Faith are: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, so that two whole perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition or confusion, which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ."

CHAP. II.

SIMPLEST OPINION CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

HAVING stated the three opinions concerning the person of Christ, to which all others may be reduced, I proceed to compare the grounds upon which they rest.

And here I must begin with observing, that general reasonings concerning the probability of any of these opinions, or its apparent suitableness to the end of Christ's manifestation, ought not to enter into this comparison. Ingenious men have said plausible things in the way of general reasoning in support of all the three. It may to some appear difficult to balance one of the speculations against the other, because men will be inclined to give a preference according to the complexion of their understanding, and their former habits of thinking. But you will be satisfied that such reasonings are of little or no weight in the scale of evidence, when you recollect how soon they lead us beyond our depth. Probability in this subject depends upon a multitude of circumstances, which are not within the sphere of our observation. Fitness or expediency in this subject depends upon the order and the designs of that universal government of which we see only a part. The fact, that Jesus Christ appeared in the land of Judea the teacher of a new religion, could not have been investigated by reason, but like all other facts is received upon credible testimony. The particular character and dignity of this person, therefore, is matter of revelation to be gathered from the books that inform us of his appearance; and the only solid ground of any opinion concerning his character is a right interpretation of the books in which it is described. After we have attained by sound criticism the information which is thus afforded us, reason may be employed in vindicating the opinion which that

information warrants us to hold, in bringing forward those views of its expediency which revelation enables us to assign, and in balancing the difficulties which may adhere to it, against those difficulties and objections which appear to attend other opinions not taught by Scripture. Reasoning comes here in its proper place to support our faith, by being opposed to other reasonings that attempt to shake it, and to rescue the opinion that is delivered in the word of God from the charge of absurdity. But we profess to learn the opinion from the Scriptures; and we hold it with firmness, because it is revealed.

This general observation suggests the plan upon which I mean to proceed in comparing the grounds of the three opinions. I defer all speculations concerning them, till we have learned what the Scriptures teach. I begin with the simplest propositions, advancing, as the information of Scripture leads us, to those which are farther removed from ordinary apprehension; and in this way, I shall not arrive at the most intricate parts of the subject, till our minds are established in the belief of those facts which ought to guide our reasonings. This patient method of proceeding is not the most favourable to disputation upon this subject; it is not the best calculated for lecturing upon it in a showy amusing manner; but it appears to me that in which I ought to persevere, as the only method becoming our distance, and the certain method of attaining truth.

The simplest opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that he was merely a man, ψιλος ανθρωπος; and the advocates of this opinion rest it upon numberless passages of Scripture, upon a solution of those declarations concerning Christ, which appear to be inconsistent with their opinion, and upon the insuperable difficulties in which they represent all other opinions as involved. I lay aside at present all consideration of these difficulties, because I consider every speculation concerning them as calculated to create a prejudice either for or against the evidence that is to be examined; and I direct your attention only to the Scripture grounds upon which this opinion is rested, and the declarations of Scripture by which it is opposed.

I take the Scripture grounds of this opinion from a book published about the year 1773 by Mr. Lindsey, who gave

the world a pledge of his honesty, by resigning his preferment in the Church of England, because he held this opinion. The following arguments and testimonies, he says, will abundantly show that Christ was a man like ourselves, saving those extraordinary gifts of divine wisdom and power, by which he was distinguished from the rest of mankind. 1. The prophecies that went before concerning Christ speak of him as a man,—the seed of the woman; the seed of Abraham; a prophet like to Moses; the son of David. 2. In consequence of these predictions, the Jews in all times have expected the Messiah to be a man. "Hath not the Scripture said," observe the people in the gospel of John, "that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" 3. Christ's appearance in the world; his birth; his increase in wisdom and stature; and the visible circumstances of his condition answered to the prophecies concerning him that he was to be a man. 4. Christ continually spake of himself as a man, the son of man being the phrase by which he commonly designed himself; and the son of God, the title which he sometimes assumed, admitting of an interpretation, which does not contradict his being a man. 5. John, his forerunner, calls him a man. And, 6. The four evangelists show by their narration that they took him to be a man; and in the other books of the New Testament he is often so designed.

The testimonies which Mr. Lindsey has collected under these heads* prove that Christ was truly a man; they undoubtedly convey an impression that he was a man in all respects like us; and if they contained the whole doctrine of Scripture concerning the nature and person of Christ, the first opinion would claim to be received upon the highest possible evidence. But Mr. Lindsey is aware that there are passages in Scripture which appear to contradict this opinion. Like all those who have agreed with him in opinion, he attempts to give a solution of them; and the point that must be considered is, whether there are declarations in Scripture of such a kind, as to efface the impression made by the testimonies collected under the six heads now mentioned, and to show that the first opinion rests upon a partial view of Scripture.

* Sequel to Apology, by Theophilus Lindsey, ch. 7.

CHAP. III.

PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS.

THE philosophy which you have learned has completely exploded the fanciful doctrine of some ancient sects, that the souls of men existed before they animated those bodies with which we behold them connected. You know that this doctrine supposes a fact, which is nowhere revealed, which is not vouched by human testimony, which is not supported by any solid argument, and is contradicted by the principle of consciousness. You believe that the souls of men began to exist with their bodies; and, although you cannot explain the time or the manner of the union between these two companions, you never ascribe to the being of the man any date more ancient than the first formation of his body. If then there be evidence that Christ had a being before he was conceived of the Virgin Mary, he cannot be a man like us. He may be truly a man with all the essential properties of human nature, so that there is no impropriety in ascribing to him the name of man, or the Son of Man. But the opinion of those who consider him as ψιλος ανθρωπος, nothing more than man, must be false. Accordingly, all those who hold the second and third opinions oppose to the Socinian system one simple position, viz. there is evidence from Scripture of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. This position is sufficient to overturn the first opinion, and it is necessary to lay a foundation for the second and third. For although it does not follow from the pre-existence of Christ, either that he is the most exalted creature in the universe, or that he is God, yet, if he did not exist before he was born of Mary, he cannot be either the one or the other.

A position which contradicts the first opinion, and which is assumed in the other two, seems to be the proper point from which to set out in examining the three opinions con-

cerning the person of Christ. Unless you are satisfied of the truth of this position, you will not be disposed to give yourselves much trouble in canvassing the second and third opinions. But if you find evidence, that by his pre-existence he is more than man, it will be natural to proceed to inquire how far he is exalted above man, whether he is a creature of a higher rank, or whether he be entirely exempted from the order of creatures.

In examining this position, I shall first bring forward those passages of Scripture, which teach plainly that our Saviour did pre-exist; and I shall next direct your attention to those passages which ascribe to him different actions in his state of pre-existence. From the first set of passages I do not mean to derive any thing more than simply a proof of the pre-existence of Jesus; but, in attending to the second, we shall unavoidably be led, by the descriptions of those actions which are ascribed to Christ, to consider his original character and dignity, and we shall thus pass naturally from the proofs of his pre-existence to the proofs of a higher point, to those passages, upon a right interpretation of which turns the decision of the question between the second and third opinions.

I shall at present bring forward only those passages of Scripture which teach plainly that our Saviour existed before he was born of Mary; and, in reviewing them, I shall lay before you those solutions of their meaning which are given by the more early or the later Socinian writers, that you may judge how far it is easy to reconcile them with the opinion of our Lord's being ψιλος ανθρωπος.

You will recollect a language which runs through a great part of the New Testament, that "God sent Jesus into the world," that Jesus "came in the flesh," "was made flesh," "was made a little lower than the angels," "took part of flesh and blood." Now this language is greatly wanting in propriety and significancy, if Jesus began to exist at that time when he is said to have come in the flesh; whereas the expressions recited are the very manner in which it is necessary to speak of his becoming a man, if he had an existence beforehand. A language which thus implies that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, being found in numberless places, may be considered as meant to correct the inference which might otherwise be drawn from the

phraseology of Scripture, in which he is spoken of as a man. At the same time, you will not consider this implication as the proper ground upon which to rest so important a conclusion. We derive the knowledge of the pre-existence of Jesus from explicit declarations of Scripture, and having, in this way, attained assurance of the fact, we find the general phraseology of Scripture so contrived as to reconcile this fact with his being truly a man. These explicit declarations were made by John the Baptist, by our Lord himself, and by his apostles.

1. John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus in these words. Jo. i. 15, 30. "After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me," πρωτος μου ην. You would expect πρωτιερος instead of πρωτος. But there are many instances in the best Greek writers of a similar construction. Ηρχε τε Περσων πρωτος παντων Δαξειου, is an expression used by Aristophanes;* and if πρωτος μου, *first*, when compared with me, be equivalent to πρωτιερος μου, there seems to be here a plain declaration of the pre-existence of Jesus. The Socinian interpretation is, "the Christ, who is to begin his ministry after me, has, by the divine appointment, been preferred before me, because he is my chief or principal, πρωτοστατης μου, and I am only his servant." But Bishop Pearson, on the second article of the creed, has well observed, that, according to this interpretation, a thing is made the reason of itself. He is preferred before me, because he is my chief; whereas if πρωτος μουην be considered as expressive of time, not of dignity, it contains a reason for the former clause. He who was born a few months after me, and whose ministry begins after mine, has been placed before me, has a higher station assigned him in the economy of that dispensation which is now opening, because he had an existence before me. It is true, that the three other evangelists make John the Baptist say, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I." ισχυροτερος μου. But you will perceive, when you compare the four, that the phrase is equivalent to εμπροσθεν μου, "is preferred before me," not to πρωτος μου. For the speech in the other three consists only of one clause; and John, who, writing after the others, has supplied many things that were wanting in them, added

* Aristoph. Ορνιθες, lin. 484.

the words ὅτι πρῶτός μου ἦν. He has used the same expression in another place of his Gospel, where it must denote time. If the world hate you, says Jesus to his disciples, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκε. You will observe, too, that if the phrase had had the uncommon remote meaning which the Socinians affix to it, instead of πρῶτός ἦν, it should have been πρῶτός ἐστι. For unless Jesus pre-existed, he was not the chief of John till he entered upon his ministry, the beginning of which John was only announcing. Lardner, aware probably of the force of the objections made by Bishop Pearson, has given another interpretation of these words, which some of the modern Socinians consider as probably expressing the meaning still more truly. "He that cometh after me has always been before me, or in my view, *i. e.* present to my mind as the object of my continual expectation and reverence; for he was my superior." I leave you to judge, whether it is likely that the hearers of John would affix either the latter or the former Socinian meaning to his words, and whether a declaration, which he repeats frequently as his witness to the Messiah, is not to be understood according to the plain obvious sense given in our translation.

John iii. 31. "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." John is making a comparison between himself and Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The 31st verse states a distinction, not merely in respect of dignity, but in respect of origin and extraction; and the heavenly extraction of Jesus is introduced as the ground of his superior dignity.

I have called your attention to this passage, because it appears to me to be the answer to a sophism which is frequent in the modern Socinian writers. When such expressions, as Jesus being sent from God and coming from heaven, are urged in proof of his pre-existence, they uniformly answer, that these expressions mean nothing more than that he received a divine commission. "For," they say, "John also is called a man sent from God; and our Lord, upon one occasion, asked the chief priests, the baptism of John, was it from heaven, or was it from men? he meant was it of divine or of human institution; and it was the same thing, whether he had asked did John come from

heaven, or was his baptism from heaven?" But the words of John Baptist in this place show that he understood there would have been an essential difference between the two questions. He asserts in other places that he was sent by God to baptize with water; and therefore his baptism might be said to be from heaven. But here he admits that he himself was of earth, whereas the person to whom he bore witness was from heaven. Their commission had the same authority; for both were sent by God. But the one was a man who received this commission after he was born: the other was a Being who, having existed before in heaven, came from heaven, and was made man, that he might execute his commission.

John iii. 13. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." These words appear to contain a declaration that the Son of man came down from heaven. But in order to elude the force of this declaration, two different expositions have been given. The one was the exposition of Socinus and his immediate followers; the other is adopted by the modern Socinians. The first is this: "It is very probable, and agreeable to the words of Scripture, that Christ, between the time of his birth, and his entering upon the office of Messiah, was translated by God to heaven, and remained there some time, that he might see and hear those things which he was to publish to the world. As Moses, who is acknowledged to be a type of Jesus, was forty days on the mount with God, and brought from thence the two tables of the law, and the pattern of all things pertaining to the worship of God, so it was most fit that Jesus should go up to heaven, of which Sinai was a type; and it is probable that the time of our Lord's temptation, when he is said to have been forty days in the wilderness, was the time of his being admitted to converse with God in heaven." According to this exposition our Lord says to Nicodemus, no man hath ascended up to heaven, to learn these heavenly things which I have to tell you, but he who came down from heaven, after he was instructed in them, even the Son of man, who *was*—rendering ὢν the imperfect participle, who was in heaven. This exposition was employed to solve all those passages where we read of Christ's coming from heaven, proceed-

ing from the Father, being sent by God. But you will observe, that there is no other proof of the fact upon which this exposition proceeds but this single circumstance, that it is possible, in this way, to explain such passages as these, without supposing the pre-existence of Jesus. His translation to heaven is admitted without evidence, in order to exclude his pre-existence. I say without evidence. For although it would have been most honourable for a man to be thus admitted to converse with God in heaven, although, according to the Socinian system, it is of the utmost importance to the followers of Jesus to have this assurance, that the words spoken by a man like themselves are truly the words of God, there is not any one passage in the New Testament which plainly declares, or even by certain inference implies, that he was translated to heaven. Other circumstances are mentioned in the short accounts that are given us of that part of his life which elapsed before he appeared preaching the Gospel. But this fact, in comparison of which most of them are insignificant, is passed over in silence by all the evangelists.

The modern Socinians have abandoned an exposition thus resting upon a conjecture, which is not only destitute of evidence, but is contradicted by the silence of the historians. And they have adopted another exposition, founded upon the figurative language which abounds in Scripture. In our way of apprehension they say, a man that would be acquainted with the secrets of the divine will should go to heaven to converse with God. Accordingly it is said by Moses: "The commandment which I command thee this day is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it."* But if ascending to heaven easily signifies being admitted to the knowledge of the divine counsels, coming down from heaven may signify being authorized to reveal it to men; and being in heaven, or in the bosom of the Father, means no more than being highly favoured of God, and made acquainted with his counsels. The declaration of Jesus to Nicodemus, therefore, does not necessarily imply a literal ascent and descent; but, when stripped of the metaphorical language

* Deut. xxx. 11, 12.

in which it is clothed, it amounts merely to this—He alone was admitted to an intimate knowledge of the will of God, and authorized to reveal it to men.

This exposition is much more plausible than the former; and it is agreeable to that interpretation which we are often obliged to give to figurative language. But you will observe that the language in this passage is not figurative; the words are perfectly simple; there is no obvious necessity for departing from that sense which is agreeable to the plain construction of them; and if a liberty is allowed of considering plain language as figurative, in order to give it a meaning very remote, and evade a doctrine which it seems clearly to teach, there can be no certainty in the declarations of Scripture. You will observe also, that according to this exposition there is a tautology in the words, which is both ungraceful and unmeaning. No man hath known the divine counsels but he who has a commission to declare them, even the Son of man, who is intimately acquainted with them. On the other hand, if you understand the second clause, according to the literal import of the words, and according to many other declarations of the New Testament, to denote a real descent from heaven, then the first and third clauses are clearly distinguished. If you consider ων as the imperfect participle, the third clause means, the Son of man who was in heaven before he descended. If you consider ων as the present participle, you give the third clause a meaning which cannot be reconciled with the Socinian system, but which is adopted by our translators in opposition to that system; the Son of Man, who, being according to the views communicated in other passages of Scripture both God and man, is in heaven while he now dwells upon earth. There is an apparent difficulty in the clause, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but the Son of Man;" for we know that Elijah did ascend, and our Lord had not ascended when he spake these words. But attention to the context enables us, without doing violence to the words, by an accommodation to circumstances which is easy and obvious, to remove that difficulty. Our Lord had been stating to Nicodemus some of the doctrines of the Christian religion, at which this master of Israel is stumbled, saying, "How can these things be?" Our Lord answers in words most

expressive of the dignity of his character, and the entire credit to which he was entitled. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" *i. e.* There are doctrines more sublime and heavenly than these at which you are stumbled. My doctrine, according to the expression of Moses with which you are well acquainted, may be said to be in heaven; and you can learn it from none but me, for no person has ascended to heaven for the purpose of bringing it from thence, εἰ μη, unless you choose to apply that expression to the person who, having been in heaven, came down from it. He is better qualified to instruct you in heavenly things, than if he had ascended for the purpose of bringing them down.

John vi. 62. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" The ancient and the modern Socinians explain away this declaration, in the same manner as that which we have now been considering. One of their latest commentaries is in these words: —"When you shall see me go up to heaven to God, where I was before," *i. e.* from whom I have received my instructions and authority, "you will then understand the language which I now hold with you." As this declaration of the pre-existence of Jesus is simpler and less embarrassed with other circumstances than that in the third chapter, so the context necessarily leads us to reject the Socinian paraphrase, and to understand the words in their obvious sense. Our Lord had been holding a long discourse with the Jews, in which he spoke of himself as the "bread of life that came down from heaven." The Jews understood this to be an assertion of his having been in heaven, and they opposed to it their knowledge of his birth. "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven." Our Lord, in answer to their murmurings, repeats and enforces his former assertion; and, after he had left the synagogue, understanding from his disciples that they also were offended at this hard saying, he says to them, "Doth this offend you? what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before;" *i. e.* to heaven, of which he had been speaking. The expression

implies a literal ascent to heaven, which was to be an object of sense, θεωρητε; and the intimation of this glorious event, which was to remove all their doubts and their offence, is conjoined with a repetition in simple language of that assertion at which they had been offended. The Evangelist had told us the sense which the Jews affixed to that assertion: the complaint of the disciples implies that they affixed the same sense to it; and we cannot suppose that they were mistaken, because this private declaration of our Lord, where I was before, is expressly calculated to confirm them in the mistake. You have our Lord, therefore, in this sixth chapter of John, holding both in the synagogue of the Jews, and in a confidential intercourse with the disciples, such a language as his hearers understood to mean that he was in heaven, before they saw him upon earth.

John viii. 58. "Before Abraham was, I am." The old Socinian interpretation was:—"I exist before that Patriarch has become, according to the import of the name Abraham, the Father of many nations; for that name is to receive its fulfilment by the preaching of my religion, in which all the nations of the earth are to be blessed through the seed of Abraham." But this is saying nothing; for the Jews, to whom our Lord is speaking, existed also before this event: I am, and ye all are, before the Patriarch becomes Abraham in this sense. The modern Socinian interpretation is not more plausible. "Before Abraham was born, I am he;" *i.e.* the Christ, in the destination and appointment of God. My commission as Messiah was fixed and determined by the Almighty, before Abraham had a being. But this is saying nothing peculiar to the Messiah; for known to God are all his works. The existence and the circumstances of the meanest creature were as much fore-ordained as those of the highest angel. The natural meaning of the words is, that Christ had a being before the birth of Abraham. Πριν γενεσθαι εκεινον is a common classical phrase for before his birth; and although εγω ημι might rather have been expected, as he is speaking of existence in a past time, yet the present tense does affirm existence; and there is a reason for this peculiar mode of expression which will occur afterwards. This obvious interpretation of the words is very much confirmed

by the circumstances in which they were spoken. Our Lord had said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." The Jews understood from this expression that he had seen Abraham, that is, they understood him to affirm that he existed in Abraham's day; and they answered, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Our Lord had not said that he had seen Abraham, but, because it was true, he does not disavow it; and he confirms the conclusion which they had drawn from his former saying, by declaring expressly that he existed not only in the time, but before the birth of Abraham. "Before Abraham was, I am." They did not mistake his meaning; but they were filled with indignation at the presumption which his words appeared to them to discover; and "they took up stones to cast at him." Other texts, as John xvi. 28, John xiii. 3, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 2 Cor. viii. 9, also teach the pre-existence of Jesus.

To assist you in understanding the principles of that solution, by which the Socinians endeavour to evade the force of the plainest declarations concerning the pre-existence of Jesus, I shall give a particular account of the manner in which they explain John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus appears in this place to declare explicitly, and at a most solemn time, when he "lift up his eyes to heaven," and in the hearing of his disciples prayed to God immediately before he went out to the garden where he was betrayed, that he had glory with the Father before the world was: and it is very remarkable that he introduces the mention of this glory, when it was not necessary to complete the sense of any proposition; for he is praying that God would glorify him. And yet, as if on purpose to prevent the apostles who heard the prayer from supposing that he was asking that which he had not possessed in any former period, he adds, "with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." To a plain reader it would seem, that, if Jesus never had any such glory, these words, uttered in such circumstances, discover the highest presumption and impiety. But, observe the Socinian exposition: "The glory for which Jesus prays is something posterior

to his sufferings; yet he speaks of it in the 22d and 24th verses as already given him, την δοξαν την εμην ην εδωκας εμοι. He had not at this time received it; but the Father had promised it. And since the promise of God can never fail, he considers it as fully his own as if he had been in possession of it. In the same manner he says he had glory with God before the world was; not that he had really been in possession of it before the world was, but because it was then destined for him by God. God is said to have 'chosen us before the foundation of the world;' and the kingdom of heaven is said to be prepared for us from the beginning of the world, although we had then no being. And so Christ says that God loved him, and that he had glory with God before he had a being. And the glory for which he prays is not his own private advancement, but the success of that gospel by which the virtue and happiness of mankind were to be promoted. This had been his sole aim, for which he had lived, and for which he was about to die. And now, at the approach of death, he says, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, complete thine own work in the happy beneficial consequences of my death, and speedy restoration to life, as in thine all-wise eternal purpose thou hast decreed." These are the most exalted sentiments which can be conceived to animate a human breast; and I doubt not you feel, as I have often felt, that admiration of these sentiments creates a kind of prejudice in favour of that interpretation, which supposes them to be uttered, in the most trying scenes, by a mere man. But we should recollect that there are many occasions in which the influence of the principle of admiration makes us overlook the simplicity of truth; and that the excellence of an object is then really known, not when it is magnified by our imaginations in a particular light, but when its whole nature is considered. The Scriptures, by teaching clearly the pre-existence of Jesus, by representing him as acting at all times under a consciousness of his original dignity, and an assurance of his exaltation, do not leave room for that enigmatical exposition of the words of this prayer, by which his sentiments at the close of his life are assimilated to the heroism of mortals. The expressions which he uses, according to the plain sense of them, are becoming him

who knew whence he came and whither he was going; and, if they do not present us with an extraordinary effort of mere human virtue in the Son of man, they present us with a worthier object of our faith and hope, the Son of God, who had been made man, returning to his Father.

Before I leave those passages which teach the pre-existence of Jesus, it is proper to speak of a title, the true meaning of which is intimately connected with this subject. One of the grounds of the Socinian opinion, I said, is this, that Jesus commonly designs himself the Son of man, and that the other title, the Son of God, which he sometimes assumes, admits of an interpretation not inconsistent with his being a mere man. This interpretation the Socinians derive from different passages of Scripture, where Jesus is styled the Son of God, for reasons that have no connexion with his existence in a previous state. The first is his miraculous conception. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee," *i. e.* begotten of thee, "shall be called the Son of God." The second is the distinguished commission which he received as Messiah, and the honour conferred upon him. For in the language of the New Testament the Christ, or Messiah, and the Son of God, are used as equivalent interchangeable terms. "We believe," said the disciples, "that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The High Priest asked Jesus at his trial, "Art thou the Son of the Blessed?" and John concludes his Gospel with saying, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." There is still a third reason upon account of which Jesus is called in Scripture the Son of God, and that is his resurrection. For Paul says, Acts xiii. 33, "God hath fulfilled the promise which was made unto the fathers, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" and he says in his Epistle to the Romans, "Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." It appears undeniably from these passages that there is an intimate connexion in the language of Scripture between this title, the Son of God, and

these three circumstances, the miraculous conception, the office, and the resurrection of Jesus. But none of these three necessarily imply that he existed in a previous state; and, therefore, it appears to me, that although it be natural to form the most exalted conceptions of a person called the Son of God, yet, if no other premises were given us, we should not be warranted to infer the pre-existence of Jesus from his bearing that name. You must first establish by other evidence that he did pre-exist, and then you infer, from his being called the Son of God, that the meaning of that name is not exhausted by his miraculous conception, his office, and his resurrection, but that it serves farther to intimate the manner of his pre-existence. This reasoning would be fair and conclusive if our Lord were called simply the Son of God. But its conclusiveness appears more manifest when you consider those discriminating epithets which are joined to this name. God is our Father by creation, and by the grace of the Gospel, and they who partake of that grace are often called his sons. But Jesus Christ is styled his own Son, the Son of his love, his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; and, in the Gospels and Epistles of John, the only begotten Son of God; all which imply that the highest meaning of this title belongs to Jesus. It has been said that the phrase, only begotten Son, which is peculiar to John, means nothing more than beloved. But these two phrases are not synonymous amongst men. A child may be only begotten without being beloved, and he may be beloved without being only begotten. It is irreverent to suppose that so significant a phrase would be employed by John upon such a subject, in a sense so inferior to its natural import. And it is known that the Christians, from the earliest times, adopted in their creeds this phrase, his only begotten Son, or his only Son, as distinguishing Jesus from every other Son of God.

Now you will observe, that although the name of the Son of God is connected in Scripture with the miraculous conception of Jesus, his office, and his resurrection, none of these three come up to the meaning of this phrase, the only Son of God. Not his miraculous conception.—He was indeed conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. But Adam also is called the Son of God; and unless you

deny that Jesus was truly the son of Mary, you must admit that there was in this respect still greater propriety in giving the name of the Son of God to a person, who, being formed without father or mother out of the dust of the earth, was still more immediately the workmanship of God.—Not his office as Messiah; for many special messengers had been sent by God to men in former times. In allusion to them, Jesus is often styled a prophet, a messenger, the sent of God. But the mark of distinction between him and them, which some prophecies of the Old Testament announce, and which the books of the New Testament often express, is this, that he is the Son of God, his only begotten Son; words which have no meaning, if they refer purely to that commission which he received in common with others, and which are always so introduced as to lead our thoughts to a character which he had before he received the commission. Neither does the resurrection of Jesus come up to the meaning of the phrase, the only begotten Son of God. He was indeed brought by the Father out of the bowels of the earth. But we are taught that all who are in their graves shall rise; and he himself hath said that they who are accounted worthy to obtain the world to come are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, υἱοι εἰσι τοῦ Θεοῦ, τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοι ὀντες. According to the views given in Scripture, Jesus is the first that rose from the dead never to die any more, and the resurrection of good men is the effect of his. He is thus, in respect of his resurrection, the first among many brethren. "Every one in his own order, Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's." His resurrection was indeed the demonstration that that name which he had taken to himself during his life did really belong to him; and therefore it is said, he "was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection." But to say that his resurrection made him the Son of God is to confound the evidence of a thing with the thing itself.

These few remarks may satisfy you that neither the miraculous conception of Jesus, nor his office, nor his resurrection, contains the full import of this name, the only begotten Son of God. But there is a more ancient and a more exalted title to this name, which is inseparable from

his nature. I enter not at present into the various and intricate speculations to which this subject has given occasion. We shall be better prepared afterwards for touching them slightly. I meant only, by connecting the mention of this name with those passages which teach the pre-existence of Jesus, to make you bear in your minds during the progress of our researches, that the peculiar reasons of a name, which you will find uniformly appropriated to Jesus, are to be sought for not in the history of his appearance upon earth, but in those passages which contain the revelation of his pre-existent state.

CHAP. IV.

ACTIONS ASCRIBED TO JESUS IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE.

Creation.

HAVING drawn from explicit declarations of Scripture sufficient evidence that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, I am next to direct your attention to those passages which ascribe to him different actions in his pre-existent state. The nature of the actions, and the manner in which they are narrated, will unavoidably lead us to form some conception of the character and dignity which belonged to Jesus before he appeared upon earth; so that, if this branch of the examination shall confirm the belief of the pre-existence of Jesus, it will not only destroy the first opinion, but will assist us in comparing the grounds upon which the second and third opinions rest.

As no action in which we have any concern can be more ancient than creation, it is natural to begin with those passages in which creation is ascribed to Jesus. The Apostle Paul says, Eph. iii. 9, "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." But as the last words, δι' Ιησου Χριστου, are not found in the most ancient MSS. and were not quoted by any of the Christian writers before the Council of Nice, it is conjectured by Mill, in whose valuable edition of the Greek Testament all the various readings are collected, that these words were first written in the margin, as a commentary suggested by expressions in the other Epistles, and were afterwards adopted by the transcribers of the New Testament into the text. The conjecture appears plausible, and the most zealous defender of the pre-existence of Jesus need not hesitate to sub-

scribe to it; for our faith in this important article, that he is the Creator of the world, does by no means rest upon this incidental expression, which, supposing that it was not originally written by the apostle, would never have obtained a place in the text, had it not been literally derived from the more full declarations contained in other passages of Scripture.

These full declarations are found in the beginning of the Gospel of John, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. All the three appear to teach, explicitly and particularly, that Jesus is the Creator of the world. Yet they have received different interpretations, of which you ought not to be ignorant; and your being able to deduce with certainty that which we account the true meaning of the words, and to defend it against the objections by which it has been attacked, depends upon the knowledge of circumstances which form so essential a branch of your studies, that I think it my duty to give a particular elucidation of these three passages.

SECTION I.

JOHN I. 1—18.

You will begin with observing the steps by which the apostle proceeds in enunciating his meaning. The first five verses do not of themselves mark out the person to whom they apply. It would seem that a person is intended: For time, εν αρχη, place, προς τον Θεον, and action, παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο, are ascribed to ὁ Λογος. But the name is not clear enough to mark out who he is. In the 6th verse there is the proper name of a man, Ιωαννης. And it appears from the sequel of the chapter, that this Ιωαννης is the person whom we are accustomed to call John the Baptist. It is said of this Ιωαννης, in the 7th verse, ουτος ηλθεν εις μαρτυριαν, ινα μαρτυρηση περι του φωτος. The article defines the word φωτος, and leads you back to a light already spoken of, and

consequently supposed to be known to the reader, *i. e.* the light mentioned in the 4th verse, which, from the connection, is unquestionably the same with *ὁ λογος*. *Εν αυτῳ, i. e. λογῳ, ζωη ην, και ἡ ζωη ην το φως των ανθρωπων.* It is said in the 5th verse that this light appears; and the 7th verse establishes a connexion between the appearance of the light and the appearance of John, for he came to bear witness of it. 8th verse, *ουκ ην εκεινος το φως, αλλ' ἱνα μαρ τυρησῃ περι του φωτος.* The time of this shining of the light must have been posterior to the appearance of John, and the manner of the shining must have been explained by his words, otherwise his testimony could not have been of any use in making men believe. But John the Baptist was the contemporary and the countryman of the writer of this Gospel. He died, indeed, at an early period of life. Still, however, many of the persons into whose hands this Gospel came might know perfectly, either from their own recollection, or from what they had heard others report, the general purport of John's testimony, so as to be directed by his words in applying the expression of the evangelist. Those, who knew what John the Baptist had said, could not fail to know what was the *το φως* of which he came to bear witness. It is further stated that the person who had been called in the first five verses, *ὁ λογος* and *το φως*, was an inhabitant of earth at the time of John's appearance; for you read in the 10th verse, *εν τω κοσμῳ ην*,—14th verse, *εθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αυτου.* And this glory, which was beheld, was not a celestial transient glory, dazzling the sight of mortals like a meteor, and quickly hid in clouds; for *ὁ λογος σαρξ εγενετο, και εσκηνωσεν εν ἡμιν.* It appeared in a bodily substantial form. The person, who has been called *ὁ λογος*, pitched his tent, dwelt for some time amongst men, and while the glory which they beheld impressed them with a notion of his dignity, he engaged their affections by the grace of his manners; for he was *πληρης χαριτος και αληθειας.* Here are limiting circumstances so peculiar in their nature, that they cannot apply to any other inhabitant of earth in the days of John Baptist but that extraordinary personage, whose memory was fresh in the minds of his countrymen when this Gospel was written, and whose name is expressly mentioned in the 17th verse, *Ιησους Χριστος.* It deserves particular notice, that with all that

simplicity of manner which distinguishes the writer of this Gospel, he has inserted this name in such a way as to make it the explication of all that had gone before. He had said in the 14th verse, ὁ λογος σαρξ εγενετο· και εσκηνωσεν εν ἡμιν, (και εθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αυτου, δοξαν ὡς μονογενους παρα πατρος,) πληρης χαριτος και αληθειας. Here he applies to ὁ λογος, the person of whom he had been speaking from the beginning of the chapter, two phrases, μονογενης, and πληρης χαριτος και αληθειας: and in the 17th verse, he introduces the name, Ιησους Χριστος, after the repetition of one of these phrases, and before the repetition of the other, manifestly connecting the name with both the phrases. It appears, then, from this general analysis of these eighteen verses, that this evangelist must be not merely a most inconsequential writer, but a writer who purposely and artificially misleads his readers, unless the person who is called ὁ λογος in the first verse be the same who is called Ιησους Χριστος in the 17th, that is, unless the whole of this passage be applicable to Jesus Christ. But if the whole be applicable to him, we have the testimony of an apostle, that all things were made by him. Παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο· και χωρις αυτου εγενετο ουδε ἑν ὁ γεγονε.

I have chosen to lead you in this manner to the knowledge of the person meant by ὁ λογος, because the fairest way of interpreting a passage is to lay the whole of it together, and so bring the sense of an author out of his words. But it is natural to inquire, why did John use this dark expression? Why has he begun his Gospel in such a manner as to require this circuitous method of arriving at his meaning? Would it not have been better to have said plainly, In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God, and Jesus Christ was God?

In answer to this question, you will recollect that many of those modes of expression in ancient writers, which appear hurtful to perspicuity, were dictated by some circumstances peculiar to the country, or the times in which the writers lived; and that the obscurity, in which to us such expressions seem to be involved, is removed by the knowledge of those circumstances which rendered them the most proper and significant when they were used. There has been much dispute what were the circumstances that led John to use this expression, ὁ λογος. The subject is

involved in considerable obscurity from our imperfect knowledge of the dates of particular tenets. But I shall endeavour to give, in a short compass, the result of a very fatiguing examination of the dispute.

Before the days of our Saviour, there were Targums, *i. e.* Chaldee paraphrases of the Old Testament, for the use of the vulgar Jews, who, upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, did not understand the original Hebrew. As these Targums were composed by the learned men of the nation, and portions of them were read every Sabbath-day in the synagogues, they may be considered as the national interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures: and they have often been quoted by those who have entered deeply into the argument from prophecy, as the vouchers of the sense which the Jews affixed to their own predictions before the days of our Saviour. These Targums, in almost every place where Jehovah is mentioned in the Hebrew as talking with men, assisting them, or holding any immediate intercourse with them, have used this circumlocution, the word of Jehovah. In the Hebrew, Jehovah created man in his own image; in the Targum, the word of Jehovah created man. In the Hebrew, Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God; in the Targum, they heard the voice of the word of the Lord God. In the Hebrew, Jehovah thy God, he it is that goeth before thee; in the Targum, Jehovah thy God, his word goeth before thee. Those who are qualified to judge of this matter say that all the personal characters of action are ascribed in the Targums to the Word; and that there are places where the sense renders it impossible to understand the word of Jehovah as merely an idiom of the language equivalent to Jehovah. Thus in the Hebrew it is, God came to Abimelech; in the Targum, his word came from the face of God to Abimelech. And the 110th Psalm is thus paraphrased. Jehovah said to his Word, sit thou at my right hand. We cannot suppose that this mode of expression would have been introduced into the Targums, at the time when they were composed, had it then appeared a novelty; and there is no doubt that, by the weekly reading of the paraphrases, it would become familiar to the ears of Jews. Accordingly, in the Wisdom of Solomon, a book which is understood to have been written a hun-

dred years before Christ, we meet with the following expression, referring to the judgment upon the land of Egypt: "Thine almighty word leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up, filled all things with death, and it touched the heavens, but it stood upon the earth."* This may appear to you a bold expressive figure for the divine energy which was exerted in the punishment of the Egyptians, in the same manner as that passage in Psalm xxxiii. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," does not necessarily convey to a mind accustomed to weigh the import of language any more than that the heavens were made by the Lord. But there appears the best reason for thinking that the constant use of this circumlocution cherished in the minds of the body of the Jews the belief that there was a person distinct from the Father whose name was the word of Jehovah; and it is certain that Philo, a learned Jew, bred at Alexandria, who lived about the time of our Saviour, whose books were published before his death, speaks in numberless places of the λογος, whom he calls a second God, the Son of God, the image of God, the instrument by whom God made the worlds. Philo did not learn this word in the Platonic school; for although λογος occurs often in the writings of the later Platonists, who lived in the second and third centuries, there is no evidence that Plato, or any of his disciples before Philo, used λογος as the name of a person distinct from God. It is doubted by Mosheim whether Philo himself believed that there was a distinction; and that indefatigable inquirer has brought together, in his notes upon Cudworth, several passages which appear to me to make it probable that Philo, like many other philosophers, had an esoteric and an exoteric, a secret and an ostensible doctrine. His secret doctrine was, that what his countrymen called λογος was nothing else but the conception formed in the mind of God of the work which he was to execute, and that what they accounted a distinction of persons was ideal and minal, accommodated to the narrowness of our appre-

* Wisdom of Solomon, xviii. 15, 16.

hension. But if this was truly his private sentiment, his calling the λογος the Son of God, and a second God, is a proof that the opinion concerning the Word of Jehovah as a person, had so firm a possession of the minds of his countrymen, that he did not wish to offend them by teaching openly and unequivocally a doctrine opposite to that which they had derived from Scripture and tradition.

Not long after the writings of Philo were published, there arose the Gnostics, a sect, or rather a multitude of sects, who having learned in the same Alexandrian school to blend the principles of oriental philosophy with the doctrine of Plato, formed a system most repugnant to the simplicity of Christian faith. It is this system which Paul so often attacks under the name of "false philosophy, strifes of words, endless genealogies, science falsely so called." The foundation of the Gnostic system was the intrinsic and incorrigible depravity of matter. Upon this principle they made a total separation between the spiritual and the material world. Accounting it impossible to educe out of matter any thing which was good, they held that the Supreme Being, who presided over the innumerable spirits that were emanations from himself, did not make this earth, but that a spirit of an inferior nature, very far removed in character as well as in rank from the Supreme Being, formed matter into that order which constitutes the world, and gave life to the different creatures that inhabit the earth. They held that this Inferior Spirit was the Ruler of the creatures whom he had made, and they considered men, whose souls he imprisoned in earthly tabernacles, as experiencing under his dominion the misery which necessarily arose from their connexion with matter, and as estranged from the knowledge of the true God. Most of the later sects of the Gnostics rejected every part of the Jewish law, because the books of Moses give a view of the creation inconsistent with their system. But some of their earlier sects, consisting of Alexandrian Jews, incorporated a respect for the law with the principles of their system. They considered the Old Testament dispensation as granted by the δημιουργος the Maker and Ruler of the world, who was incapable from his want of power, of delivering those who received it from the thraldom of matter: and they looked for a more glorious

messenger, whom the compassion of the Supreme Being was to send for the purpose of emancipating the human race. Those Gnostics who embraced Christianity regarded the Christ as this messenger, an exalted Æon, who being in some manner united to the man Jesus, put an end to the dominion of the δημιουργος, and restored the souls of men to communion with God. It was natural for the Christian Gnostics who had received a Jewish education, to follow the steps of Philo, and the general sense of their countrymen, in giving the name λογος to the δημιουργος; and as Χριστος was understood from the beginning of our Lord's ministry to be the Greek word equivalent to the Jewish name Messiah, there came to be, in their system, a direct opposition between Χριστος and λογος. Λογος was the maker of the world: Χριστος was the Æon sent to destroy the tyranny of λογος.

One of the first teachers of this system was Cerinthus. We have not any particular account of all the branches of his system; and it is possible that we may ascribe to him some of those tenets by which later sects of Gnostics were discriminated. But we have authority for saying that the general principle of the Gnostic scheme was openly taught by Cerinthus before the publication of the Gospel of John. The authority is that of Irenæus, a bishop who lived in the second century, who in his youth had heard Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John, and who retained the discourses of Polycarp in his memory till his death. There are yet extant of the works of Irenæus five books which he wrote against heresies, one of the most authentic and valuable monuments of theological erudition. In one place of that work he says, that Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the Supreme God, but by a certain power very separate and far removed from the Sovereign of the Universe, and ignorant of his nature.* In another place, he says, that John the apostle wished, by his Gospel, to extirpate the error which had been spread among men by Cerinthus;† and Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, says that John wrote his Gospel, at the desire of the Bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and other heretics, and chiefly

* Iren. contra Hær. lib. iii. cap. xi. 1.

† Id. lib. i. xxvi. 1.

against the doctrines of the Ebionites, then springing up, who said that Christ did not exist before he was born of Mary.*

From laying these accounts together it appears to have been the tradition of the Christian Church, that John, who lived to a great age, and who resided at Ephesus, in proconsular Asia, was moved by the growth of the Gnostic heresies, and by the solicitations of the Christian teachers, to bear his testimony to the truth in writing, and particularly to recollect those discourses and actions of our Lord, which might furnish the clearest refutation of the persons who denied his pre-existence. This tradition is a key to a great part of his Gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, had given a detail of those actions of Jesus which are the evidences of his divine mission; of those events in his life upon earth which are most interesting to the human race; and of those moral discourses in which the wisdom, the grace, and the sanctity of the Teacher shine with united lustre. Their whole narration implies that Jesus was more than man. But as it is distinguished by a beautiful simplicity which adds very much to their credit as historians, they have not, with the exception of a few incidental expressions, formally stated the conclusion that Jesus was more than man, but have left the Christian world to draw it for themselves from the facts narrated, or to receive it by the teaching and the writings of the Apostles. John, who was preserved by God to see this conclusion, which had been drawn by the great body of Christians, and had been established in the Epistles, denied by different heretics, brings forward, in the form of a history of Jesus, a view of his exalted character, and draws our attention particularly to the truth of that which had been denied. When you come to analyze the Gospel of John, you will find that the first eighteen verses contain the positions laid down by the Apostle, in order to meet the errors of Cerinthus; that these positions, which are merely affirmed in the introduction, are proved in the progress of the Gospel, by the testimony of John the Baptist, and by the words and the actions of our Lord; and that after the proof is concluded by the declaration of

* Jerome De Vit. Illust. cap. ix.

Thomas, who, upon being convinced that Jesus had risen, said to him, "my Lord and my God," John sums up the amount of his Gospel in these few words: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," *i. e.* that Jesus and the Christ are not distinct persons, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Apostle does not condescend to mention the name of Cerinthus, because that would have preserved, as long as the world lasts, the memory of a name which might otherwise be forgotten. But although there is dignity and propriety in omitting the mention of his name, it was necessary, in laying down the positions that were to meet his errors, to adopt some of his words, because the Christians of those days could not so readily have applied the doctrine of the Apostle to the refutation of those heresies which Cerinthus was spreading among them, if they had not found in the exposition of that doctrine some of the terms in which the heresy was delivered: and as the chief of these terms, λογος, which Cerinthus applied to an inferior spirit, was equivalent to a phrase in common use among the Jews, the word of Jehovah, and was probably borrowed from thence, John, by his use of λογος, rescues it from the degraded use of Cerinthus, and restores it to a sense corresponding to the dignity of the Jewish phrase.

You will perceive from this induction the fitness with which the Apostle John introduces this word λογος, although it had not been used by the other Evangelists who wrote before the errors of Cerinthus. You may think it strange that λογος, which is announced with such solemnity at the beginning, does not occur again in this Gospel. But the reason is suggested by the introduction itself. John has said in the 14th verse, ὁ λογος σαρξ εγενετο, and he has inserted Jesus Christ in the 17th verse as the name of the man who was the Word made flesh. Our Lord was λογος in the beginning. But during his ministry upon earth his name was properly Jesus Christ; and John might suppose that every reader who was acquainted with his introduction would understand by that name, as often as it occurred, the same person whom he had there called λογος. But although this name could not with propriety occur in a history of the man Christ Jesus, it is found in

the beginning of the first Epistle of John, which, like his Gospel, was opposed to the errors of Cerinthus. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, περι του λογου της ζωης, that declare we unto you." And in one of those sublime descriptions of the person of our Saviour, in his glorified state, which are found in the book of Revelation, this name is directly applied to him. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood; and his name is called the Word of God," ὁ λογος του Θεου. Rev. xix. 13. If the book of Revelation was written, as there has always appeared to me great reason to suppose, before the Gospel of John, this direct application of ὁ λογος to our Saviour, would render it easy for the Christians to understand the meaning of this introduction.

After having gone at such length into the reason of the use of the word λογος, which is the only real difficulty in this passage, I shall easily deduce the proposition for the sake of which I quoted it, that Jesus created the world. Observe then, that εν αρχῃ necessarily brings to our minds the first words of Genesis, εν αρχῃ εποιησεν ὁ Θεος τον ουρανον και την γην; and that both by this obvious reference to a well-known passage, and by what is said in the third verse, παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο, εν αρχῃ must be understood to mean a time before any thing was made. The Apostle asserts that, at this time, εν αρχῃ, the Word was. He does not say εγενετο, was made, but ην, existed; and that the Word existed, not in a state of distance, but προς τον Θεον, at, or with God; not in a state of inferiority, but Θεος ην ὁ λογος. This last clause is properly rendered, "The Word was God." It is common in the Greek language to distinguish the subject of a proposition from the predicate, by prefixing the article to the subject, and giving no article to the predicate. Examples of this will be found in Dr. Campbell's Commentary, and will occur to those who are familiar with the New Testament in the original. John iv. 24; xvii. 10.

To draw the attention of the Christians to the error of Cerinthus, the second position is repeated in the second verse, ὁ λογος ην προς τον Θεον: and then, after this explicit repeated affirmation of his original dignity, it is added, παντα

δι' αυτου εγενετο. It is not said that all other things were made by him, as if he was one created being. But παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο: and, according to the manner of this apostle, which abounds in repetition, and is here peculiarly fitted to meet the error of Cerinthus, it is added, χωρις αυτου εγενετο ουδε ἑν ὁ γεγονε, which marks strongly that his creating power extended to all parts of the universe. "In him," says the apostle, "was the life of men." Not only the great objects of nature were formed by him, but every individual being, every animal, derived existence from him. When he came to enlighten the world which he had made, he came εις τα ἰδια, to his own dominion, and those who did not receive him were οἱ ἰδιοι, his own subjects. According to the system of the Gnostics, the Christ, the light of the world, came into the territory of another, to emancipate men from the tyranny of their maker. But here original creation and future illumination are expressly ascribed to the same person, who being before all things with God, in the beginning made, and at a subsequent period enlightened, the world. I have only further to remark, that λογος and μονογενης, which, in the system of some of the Gnostics, were different Æons, are in this passage the same with Jesus Christ.

Having thus easily attained the proposition, which this passage was adduced to prove, I shall not have occasion to occupy time in refuting the two other interpretations which it has received. The one is the old Socinian interpretation, according to which Jesus is called λογος, merely because he revealed or spoke the will of God to man; and the first three verses receive the following paraphrase. "In the beginning of the Gospel, there was a man, who, being the revealer of God's will, was called ὁ λογος, who was with God, being taken up to heaven after his birth, that he might there learn what he was to teach to others; and who received, after his resurrection, the title of God, in virtue of the powers conferred upon him, and the office to which he was exalted. By this person the Gospel dispensation was established, and without him no part of the world was reformed." According to this interpretation, it is supposed, without evidence, that the man Jesus was taken up to heaven; Ἐν αρχῃ, contrary to its obvious meaning, is applied to the beginning of the

Gospel: the phrase Θεος ην ὁ λογος is considered as equivalent to this proposition, which appears to be directly opposite, the man who was not God is now made God; and expressions which, by the analogy and use of the Greek language, denote that things were brought into being, are explained of a reformation of their state.

But, besides all these reasons suggested by the words themselves, the history which I have given of the term λογος is a clear refutation of this forced construction. For λογος, or its equivalent in the Chaldee, being, at the time when this Gospel was written, commonly applied to a person who made the worlds, John unavoidably misled his readers, if he gave that name to a man who did not exist before he was born of Mary, and said of that man bearing this name, that all things were made by him, when he only meant that all things were reformed by him.

This Socinian interpretation is generally abandoned, even by those who deny the pre-existence of Jesus; and they have adopted in place of it, the old Sabellian interpretation. Λογος signifies reason as well as speech; *ratio mente concepta* and *ratio enunciativa*. If it be translated in this place reason, the words of John will bear a striking allusion to a remarkable passage in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs. Wisdom thus speaks, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him." Solomon, says Mr. Lindsey, represents Wisdom as a person dwelling with God, beloved by him, present with him, attending upon him in all his works of creation; and so John says, in the beginning reason or wisdom was with God, *i. e.* God was complete in wisdom before he made any manifestation of himself to his creatures; and all things were made by reason, *i. e.* were created according to the most perfect wisdom; and reason was made flesh, *i. e.* the same divine wisdom which had appeared from the beginning in the creation of the world, was communicated in large measure to the man Jesus Christ, and residing in him became visible to us.

When you judge of this interpretation, you will carry along with you, that all the Christian writers, from the earliest times, apply the description of Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs to Christ. It is quoted and argued upon in this light; and both those who held that Christ was God, and those who held that he was a creature, defended their opinions by particular expressions in this passage. To us who enjoy the revelation of the Gospel, every fact of that description appears most apposite to Christ. The true doctrine of the Gospel respecting the person of Christ seems to have been anticipated by his illustrious predecessor; and John, by the manifest similarity of some expressions in this passage to expressions in the description of Wisdom, appears to give his sanction to this interpretation of the meaning of Solomon. It is not, however, in my opinion, probable that any person who had not our advantages, would have found the person of Christ in this description; and if you lay out of your mind what you know of Christ, and attend merely to the poetical strain of the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, you will probably be disposed to consider the passage in the eighth chapter as a beautiful and well-supported instance of prosopopœia. But allowing what no person can certainly know, that Solomon meant nothing more in that passage than to personify the divine attribute of wisdom, this does not afford the most distant reason for imagining that John also personifies reason. For observe the difference of the cases. The prosopopœia of Solomon is in the midst of other passages of a like kind; and there is no part of it inconsistent with those rules which are not of modern invention, but are essential to the nature and the beauty of this figure. But the prosopopœia in this place, if there be one, is introduced abruptly, without preparation, at the beginning of a plain history, It is executed in so inartificial a manner, that words and phrases, perpetually occurring in the passage, destroy the illusion, and require a great effort of imagination to recal it. Reason, one attribute of the Deity, is called the only begotten, as if he had no other. Reason is called a man to whom another man bore witness: and instead of σοφια, the word used by the Septuagint in that personification which John is supposed to imitate, he introduces, and applies to the man of whom he

speaks, λογος, a term applied at the very time of his writing to a person different from God, and inferior to him. To consider John, therefore, as meaning here a personification of the divine attribute of wisdom, is to suppose that he employs a misplaced and ill-supported figure of speech on purpose to mislead his readers; that when he intended to say, Jesus was a man in whom the wisdom of God the maker of all things dwelt, he used language which, to the persons living in those days, and to all who study that language, cannot fail to convey the impression, that this man was a being who existed before any thing was made, and who created the world.

SECTION II.

Col. i. 15—18.

The Apostle, in reminding the Christians at Colosse, amidst the sufferings to which their faith might expose them, of the grounds of thankfulness which it afforded, is led into one of those digressions which are common in his writings. He had been speaking of that redemption through the blood of Christ, which is the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. The redemption suggests to him the dignity and character of the ransomer. He expatiates upon these topics for a few verses, and then returns to the point from which he had set out. The digression, although it appears to interrupt the course of his argument, promotes most effectually the great design of his Epistle, because it serves to satisfy the Colossians, that the Author of the new religion was qualified for the office which he assumed, and that their faith in him, without any aid from Jewish ceremonies, was able to save them. This digression is contained in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the first chapter.

I shall first give that interpretation of these verses, which seems to arise out of the words themselves; and I shall next comment upon another interpretation which they have received.

Ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου. It is proper to take along with this expression, two corresponding phrases in Heb. i. 3.—Ὅς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. All the three are highly figurative, as the whole language in which we presume to speak of the Almighty necessarily must be. But attention to the point in which the three images coincide may assist us in understanding every one of them. Εἰκὼν is a likeness or portrait, representing the features of a person, the expression and air of his countenance; ἀπαύγασμα, that which shines forth from a ray, a bright ray of his glory. The expression is probably borrowed from the book of Wisdom, vii. 25, where Wisdom is called, ἀπορροια της του παντοκρατορος δοξης ειλικρινης, απαυγασμα φωτος αιδιου, "a pure ray flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light." As light, says Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote before the Council of Nice, is known by its shining forth, so ουτος αει του φωτος, δηλον ὡς εστιν αει το απαυγασμα. On this expression was grounded an argument for the eternity and consubstantiality of the Son, his being always with the Father, and of the same nature. Χαρακτὴρ, from χαρασσω, *imprimo*, a stamp, an impression, as that by which the figure engraved on a seal is truly represented in wax. Της ὑποστασεως αυτου. I must warn you that the word ὑποστασις, which our translators have rendered Person, does not, either by its etymology, or by its use in the days of the Apostle, necessarily convey that distinction which we now mark, when we speak of the three Persons in the Godhead. For the first three centuries, ουσια and ὑποστασις were used promiscuously, and it was in the progress of controversy, that men being obliged to speak with more precision, and to define their terms, came to appropriate ὑποστασις to denote a person, while ουσια signified that nature or substance which different persons might have in common. It would therefore have been more correct, because more agreeable to the language of the Apostle's time, to have rendered χαρακτὴρ της ὑποστασεως αυτου, the express image or representation of his substance, *i. e.* of his essential attributes. It is always unsafe to build an argument upon figurative expressions; and, until we be further advanced in this inquiry, we are not warranted to say whether these

three phrases ought to receive that strict interpretation which renders them descriptive of the nature of Christ. This much they certainly imply, that the glory of the divine perfections was most accurately reflected and exhibited to man in Jesus Christ. They may imply that this accurate exhibition arises from a similitude, or sameness of nature; and if plain declarations of Scripture shall authorize us to affix this meaning to these figurative phrases, you will recollect that it is such as they seem easily to bear.

Πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως. The word πρωτοτοκος is applied by Homer, Il. xvii. 5, to an animal who, for the first time brought forth young; πρωτοτοκος κινυρη, ου πριν ειδυια τοκοιο, *non prius experta partum.* If we followed the analogy of the passage, we should translate πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, he who first brought forth the whole creation, which would render it equivalent to a phrase, Rev. iii. 14, where Jesus calls himself ἡ αρχη της κτισεως του Θεου. Αρχη, in the language of ancient philosophy, denoted an efficient cause, that which gave a beginning to other things, a principle or source of existence.

According to this received sense of the word, αρχη της κτισεως του Θεου means more than our English translation conveys,—the beginning of the creation of God; it is he who gave a beginning to, produced, the creation of God. But there are several reasons which prevent us from giving πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως the sense which renders it equivalent to this true meaning of αρχη της κτισεως. 1. Although πρωτοτοκος, like other compounds of τεκτοκα, occurs in an active sense, there is no instance of its governing a case of the word, denoting the thing brought forth; and that case, if there were one governed by it, would not be the genitive. 2. In other places of the New Testament, and in the 18th verse of this chapter, πρωτοτοκος must be translated in a passive sense, not the first who brought forth, but the first who was brought forth. 3. If you translate it here in an active sense, then the 16th verse only repeats in a multitude of words that proposition of which it professes to give a reason. He brought forth the whole creation; "for all things were created by him." For these reasons, Christian writers from the earliest times have understood this expression in a passive sense; and you will understand the meaning which they affix to it,

from the commentary of Justin Martyr in the second century; ὁ λογος, προ των ποιηματων συνων και γενομενος. And, πρωτοτοκον του Θεου, και προ παντων των κτισματων. By their use of the preposition προ in explaining this word, it appears that they would have translated it in English, born or begotten before every creature; and this method of rendering the superlative is agreeable to the expression in John, πρωτος μου ην, he was before me, *i. e.* in comparison with me, he was the first; and it is analogous to several other expressions that occur in the best Greek writers. I mention only one, suggested by Dr. Clarke. from Euripides; ουτις αλλη δυστυχεστατη γυνη εμου πεφυκεν, there is no other woman, who, considered in comparison with me, deserves the name of the most unhappy. So here, Jesus, in respect of πασης κτισεως, is πρωτοτοκος the first born, *i. e.* he was born before it. Πασης κτισεως is rendered in our translation, "every creature." According to the analogy of the Greek language, if κτιζω means *creo*, κτισις is *creatio*, the act of creating, and κτισμα *creatura*, the thing created. It is true that this distinction is not invariably observed; for as πραξις often denotes an action, a thing done, so κτισις sometimes in the New Testament must be translated a creature. But there are several passages where it must be understood in its original import, as Rev. iii. 14, already quoted, and Rom. i. 20, τα αορατα αυτου απο κτισεως κοσμου, τοις ποιημασι νοουμενα καθορωται. The English would have come nearer the Greek if the word creation had been used here instead of creature; and if, at the same time, the true force of πρωτοτοκος had been expressed by the insertion of the preposition, so as to make the whole clause stand thus, begotten before the whole creation, an inconvenience would have been avoided which arises from the present translation. To a careless reader, indeed to every one who is not capable of looking into the original, these words, first-born of every creature, seem to convey that Jesus is of the same rank and order with other creatures, distinguished from them only in seniority; and some Arians have urged this phrase in proof of the leading position of their system. But the words, if closely examined, really contain a refutation of that position which they appear to support. Had it been said, πρωτοκτιστος πασης κτισεως, this would have

implied that Jesus was a κτισμα, like all other beings. But the word πρωτοτοκος separates him from all the κτισματα. The act of producing them is κτισις. But he is τεχθεις, derived, produced from the Father in a different manner, before any of them were made. It is not intimated in the word πρωτοτοκος, or in the phrase used by John εν αρχη, at what time the Son was thus produced, whether immediately before the creation or from eternity. That must be gathered from other passages of Scripture. All that we learn here is, that the existence of the Son of God was prior to that of any created being, and that the manner of his being produced is marked by a word different from creation.

In verse sixteenth, the Apostle mentions an infallible proof of that which we have given as the amount of πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως. The Son of God was born before the whole creation, for every thing that can be conceived as a part of the creation was made by him. Οτι εν αυτῳ εκτισθη τα παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης, τα ὁρατα και τα αορατα, ειτε θρονοι, ειτε κυριοτητες, ειτε αρχαι, ειτε ἐξουσιαι· τα παντα δι' αυτου και εις αυτον εκτισται. The proposition is enunciated in such a manner as to draw our attention very strongly to the universality of it. There is first the same division as in the first book of Genesis. Εν αρχη εποιησεν ὁ Θεος τον ουρανον και την γην. Here τα παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης. And with the same anxiety to mark the universality of the proposition, which suggested the repetition that we found in John, this Apostle adds, τα ὁρατα και τα αορατα. We deduce the propriety of this addition from what we know of the tenets of the Gnostics. They said that the visible world was made by the δημιουργος, an Æon of inferior rank; but that the invisible world, all the different orders of angels, were emanations from the Supreme Mind. To them, therefore, παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης might seem only to imply that the celestial bodies and this lower world were the work of Jesus. But τα αορατα joined to τα ὁρατα, has no meaning unless it comprehends the angels; and that no order of angels might be conceived to be exempted, the Apostle adds several names, all of which, being introduced by the particles ειτε, appear to be partitions of τα ἀορατα. We cannot explain the reason why these particular names are chosen.

But we naturally infer, from their being chosen, that they refer to a system and a language with regard to angels that was then known. It was one of the doctrines of heathen philosophy, that between God, the Father of spirits, and man, there were many intermediate spirits, who had particular provinces allotted them in the government of the universe; and this doctrine was readily embraced by those who wished to incorporate heathen philosophy with Rabbinical learning. For it accorded with the views given in the Old Testament of the dispensation of the law which was ordained by angels, and with the whole of that intercourse which the Almighty condescended to maintain with his chosen people. We read in Scripture of Michael an archangel, and of a chief prince, of cherubim and seraphim, all which gives us reason to suppose that there are different orders amongst the spirits who excel in strength. Learned men have collected from the most ancient writings of the Jews that are extant, and from the mention which other authors incidentally make of their tenets, that they not only agreed in opinion with the heathen as to the superintendence of angels, but that many of them formed systems with regard to the orders and offices of these spirits, gave names to the different orders, and paid them a degree of homage corresponding to the opinion entertained of their nature. To these opinions and practices the Apostle manifestly refers, Col. ii. 18. And in accommodation to the systems formed upon this subject, he says here, that the angels, all of whom are withdrawn from the eyes of mortals, were made by the Son, whatever be their rank, implied in θρονοι; or power, in κυριοτητες, *from* κυριος; or extent of dominion, in αρχαι; or liberty allowed them in exercising their power, in εξουσιαι, *from* εξεστι, *licet*. All εν αυτῳ εκτισθη, and δι' αυτου εκτισται. These two expressions are equivalent. They were made through the exertion of a power residing in him. But εις αυτον implies more; εις marks the point to which an object tends; and the use of it in this place suggests that Jesus did not create all things for the purpose of ministering to the pleasure or glory of another, but that as they proceeded from him, so they refer to him as their end. It is equivalent to an expression in the book of Revelation, i. 8. Εγω ειμι το Α και το Ω, αρχη και τελος, λεγει ὁ Κυριος. It deserves your particular notice,

that by the use of this preposition, εἰς, one of the forms of expression, which, in other places, seems to be appropriated to the Father, is here applied to the Son. We read, Rom. xi. 36, ἐξ αυτου, και δι' αυτου, και εις αυτον τα παντα, and I Cor. viii. 6, Αλλ' ἡμιν εἰς Θεος ὁ πατηρ, ἐξ οὐ τα παντα, και ἡμεις εις αυτον. και εἰς Κυριος Ιησους Χριστος, δι' οὐ τα παντα, και ἡμεις δι' αυτου. Ἡμεις εις αυτον is not, "we in him," as in our translation, but "we to him," or "for him." The distinction made by the Apostle to the Corinthians, seems to be removed, when it is said, παντα δι' αυτου και εις αυτον εκτισται.

Verse 17th. Και αυτος εστι προ παντων. The Apostle may be considered as repeating the amount of the expression, πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, that the existence of Jesus was prior to that of any created being, a repetition made with propriety, after the thing affirmed by him has been proved, by his being the Creator of all things; or he may be considered as saying something new. There are two circumstances which lead us to understand him so. 1. The import of αυτος, a pronoun which is more proper to introduce a new proposition than to repeat a former one. 2. The tense of ειμι, which intimates not what Jesus was before his creation, but what he is now.

These circumstances render the first clause of the seventeenth verse an expression of pre-eminence. He who existed before all, and who created all, now stands before all, in a higher rank than any created being. Και τα παντα εν αυτῳ συνεστηκε; and in him they consist, being continually preserved by his agency. Paul has expressed creation fully in the sixteenth verse. And the pronoun αυτῳ giving notice that something further is to be said of the same person, it is most natural to translate συνεστηκεν, according to classical use, by preservation. This is perfectly agreeable to the passage in Aristotle. Αρχαιος μεν τις λογος και πατριος εστι πασιν ανθρωποις, ὡς εκ του Θεου τα παντα, και δια Θεου ἡμιν συνεστηκε· ουδεμια δε φυσις, αυτη καθ' ἑαυτην αυταρκης ερημωθεισα της εκ τουτου σωτηριας.* And also to an expression of Paul, Acts xvii. 28, where Paul shows an acquaintance with the Athenian poets. The quotation has been referred both to Aratus and Cleanthes.

* Arist. Opera, vol. i. Lib. de Mundo, ch. vi. 375. Ed. Lug.

Thus, then, by an analysis of these three verses, we have found a learned Jew employing the language suggested by the writers of his own country and the philosophers of the times, as the most proper for expressing that Jesus, the Son of God, is the creator and the preserver of all.

It cannot be denied that Jesus Christ is the person here spoken of. For there is no other antecedent to the relative ὁς, but υἱου της αγαπης αυτου; and as the eighteenth verse, by its meaning, must be applied to Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead, there is as clear an intimation as can well be given, that the verses intervening between the fifteenth and the eighteenth apply to him also. But these intervening verses, according to the analysis that has been given of them, are inconsistent with the first opinion concerning the person of Christ. And, therefore, those who hold that opinion, being unable to apply these verses to any other, are obliged to bring forward a system of interpretation, according to which they may, in consistency with their opinion, be applied to Christ. As this system is employed in the explication of several other passages, and is a characteristic mark perpetually recurring in the writings of those who are called Socinians, I shall take this opportunity of laying it before you fully, with the grounds upon which it is rested by themselves.

The Gospel is represented in Scripture as making a complete change upon the character of all who embrace it in faith. The opinions, the sentiments, the affections, the desires, the whole conduct of those who were converted from the superstition and gross vices of heathenism became different. They put off the old man which was corrupt, and they put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. This total change, which restores the image of God upon the soul of man, is called in different places by St. Paul, καινη κτισις; a significant figure, the meaning of which becomes more obvious, if you translate it literally a new creation, rather than a new creature. Ει τις εν Χριστῳ, καινη κτισις· τα αρχαια παρηλθεν, ἰδου γεγονε καινα παντα. 2 Cor. v. 17. And the apostle, in an epistle to the Ephesians, written at the same time as this Epistle, joining himself, according to his usual manner, with the converts, says, Αυτου γαρ ἐσμεν ποιημα, κτισθεντες εν Χριστῳ Ιησου επι εργοις αγαθοις. Eph. ii. 10. But the figu-

rative language of Scripture does not stop here. The Jewish prophets were accustomed to describe future events relative to the fall of kingdoms, or their restoration, by images drawn from the Mosaic account of the creation. I will shake the heavens and the earth, is explained by Haggai to mean, I will overthrow the throne of kings. That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundation of the earth, means, in Isaiah, the deliverance and restoration of the Jews. —In conformity to this frequent language of ancient prophecy, the evangelical prophet Isaiah paints those blessed events which were to be the consequences of Christ's coming, the conversion from idolatry, the assurance of pardon, the practice of righteousness, and the union of Jews and Gentiles under one head, by these words: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* There was a particular reason for the apostles of our Lord adopting and extending this image of Isaiah, because, in the interval between the days of the prophet and their days, the early opinions with regard to the different orders of spiritual beings had been formed, by a mixture of Jewish tradition and heathen philosophy, into a regular system. It was believed that those angels, who had rebelled against God, exercised a malignant influence over the minds and bodies of men; and that the heathen were subject to the rule of the prince of those spirits, who is styled in Scripture "the prince of this world."† But Jesus "was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."‡ He himself says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."§ He gave his disciples power over evil spirits: and he is said to be now "set in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him."‖ The Gospel dispensation, then, is represented in Scripture under the idea of a new creation of men; a regulation of the heavenly communities, a reformation of all things, παλιγγενεσια: and all this is only a figurative language, according to the style of ancient prophecy, describing in a manner the most likely to convince the understandings,

* Isaiah lxv. 17. † John xiv. 30. ‡ 1 John iii. 8.
§ Luke x. 18. ‖ Ephes. i. 20, 21. 1 Peter iii. 22.

and to affect the imaginations of those who were addressed, the infinite importance of the Gospel, the power exerted in its propagation, its intended universality, and the efficacy with which it establishes truth and virtue in the mind of man.

According to this general system of interpretation, which is applied to many passages of Scripture, the three verses in question are thus understood. The Son of God, under whose rule you converts are now placed, is the representative of the invisible God, the Lord, (the word first-born is conceived to be adopted instead of Lord, in reference to that right which primogeniture conveys amongst men,) the Lord of the new creation; Jews and Gentiles being regenerated into one mass by that doctrine which he first preached. For the effects of his religion may be represented under the figure of a new creation of all things, there being not only a reformation of the world of mankind, but a subjection to Christ of those heavenly powers who, according to Jewish notions, formerly bore rule on earth. The terms in which these powers are here spoken of were found in Jewish traditions. But it matters not how far the traditions are well-founded. Whether the powers were real or imaginary, the style used would convey to those whom the apostle is addressing the same exalted idea of the power of Christ. And the whole image is introduced merely to paint the excellency of the Gospel above all former dispensations.

I have endeavoured, in the exposition of this system of interpretation, to do justice to the principles upon which it rests. And I have explained it, not according to the rude form which it first bore, but with all the improvements and corrections to which modern Socinians have been driven by a multitude of objections.

Before we proceed to examine particularly the application of this system to the passage before us, there are two general observations which I wish to premise, the one concerning the use of allegory in Scripture; and the other concerning the interpretation of allegory.—1. It is allowed that allegory was a favourite method of conveying truth in ancient times, and that while the vulgar rest in the literal sense, an enlargement of understanding is discovered in apprehending the further meaning. There are allegories

of different kinds in the Old Testament. There are many passages, such as Psalm lxxii., which apply, in a certain sense, to events that fell under the prophet's observation, but the full explication of which is found in the dispensation of the Gospel. This arose naturally from the character of the Old Testament, which was a preparatory dispensation, looking forward in all its points to the grace and truth that were to come by Jesus Christ. When grace and truth did come, this reason for the use of allegory ceased. For the Gospel being the last dispensation, it has not, like the law, to give intimation during its existence of an approaching change. Yet still the general uses of figurative language continue: and it may be expected that the writers of the New Testament, educated in reverence for the books of the ancient prophets, and full of their images, would not lay them aside entirely in describing the events which those images had been employed to foretel. Hence an acquaintance with the figurative language of the Old Testament is of great service in expounding the New; and the exact correspondence between the two dispensations may be so employed as to make them throw light upon one another. 2. With regard to the interpretation of the allegories which are found in Scripture, I have to observe, that the same propensity to allegorize, or to find hidden spiritual meanings in plain expressions, which is discovered by some commentators upon Homer and other ancient writers, has been the occasion of very great abuse in the exposition of Scripture. From the days of Origen to the present times, the inspired writings have been brought into ridicule, or have had the truths in them perverted by the intemperate exercise of this propensity. In mystical authors the Gospel has been made to assume a form which disfigures its simplicity, and alters its character: and by those writers, whose principles lead them to banish out of Christianity every doctrine that is not easily comprehended, the language of that religion is often rendered enigmatical. For, as has been pointedly said of them, the Socinians take mystery out of the doctrine of Scripture, where it is venerable, and they place it in the phrase of Scripture, where it is repugnant to God's sincerity. The recollection of these abuses should make you receive with some suspicion every allegorical exposition of Scripture. And in judging

of it, it becomes you to recollect those rules concerning the proper introduction of figurative language, which have been dictated by good sense and enlarged observation, and which are commonly applied in reading other writers, both as a test of their good taste, and as a method of attaining their true meaning. You have direct notice from some expressions in a passage, that the words are to be understood in a figurative sense. Or you find, upon examining them closely, that there is a defect in the meaning if you understand them literally. Or the context intimates that a passage which appeared when considered singly to be literal is really figurative. There does not occur to me any other way, in which you can be warranted to give a passage of an inspired author a sense different from that which the words naturally bear; and if none of these directions are given us in this place, the Socinian interpretation of these three verses must be considered an unnecessary and licentious introduction of allegory.

There is not any expression in these verses which necessarily suggests a figurative sense. All the nominatives introduced as distributives of *τα παντα*, are words generally used in the language of those times to denote created objects; and *κτιζω* with its derivatives, is the verb commonly used in the New Testament to denote creation. *Αξιος ει, Κυριε, λαβειν την δοξαν ότι συ εκτισας τα παντα, και δια το θελημα σου εισι, και εκτισθησαν.* Rev. iv. 11. *απο κτισεως κοσμου.* Rom. i. 20. It is true that *κτιζω* and *κτισις*, are employed to denote reformation. But some expression is always joined with them in these passages to give notice that they are transferred from their original meaning. When Paul uses *κτισις* in this sense, 2 Cor. v. 17, Gal. vi. 15, he prefixes the epithet *καινη*, which is probably borrowed from the Septuagint translation of that passage in Isaiah, which runs in our Bibles, "I create new heavens and a new earth," *Εσται ὁ ουρανος και ἡ γη καινη*: and when he uses the verb *κτιζω* in the same figurative sense, the intimation is still more direct, *κτισθεντες επι εργοις αγαθοις*, Ephesians ii. 10. In these places the writer plainly leads us from the literal to the figurative sense. Here there is no such intimation; and the first appearance of the words does not suggest any reason why we may not translate them literally. When we examine them according to this literal trans-

lation, we do not find such a defect in the meaning as might warrant our rejecting it and substituting a figurative sense in its place. We believe, by the light of nature, that all things here spoken of εκτισται, were called out of nothing. The new information given us is, that this was done εν αυτῳ by the Son of God. But it is a very bold speculation to reject the obvious meaning of a proposition contained in the Gospel, merely because it gives new information; and those who believe the inspiration of Scripture will require some other reason to be assigned before they find themselves at liberty to depart from the obvious meaning; more especially as they observe that the attempt to bring plain truth out of the words in this place, by such departure, is very unsuccessful. You cannot conceive a reason for so particular an enumeration as is here given in the partitives of τα παντα, unless the action meant by the word εκτισται, extended to all the things enumerated. But that action cannot be reformation; for with regard to the phrase τα επι της γης, even although you restrict its meaning to men, the inhabitants of earth, we know that many have died without hearing the Gospel, and that many who do hear it are not the better for it: and with regard to the other phrase, τα εν τῳ ουρανῳ, we have no ground for thinking that the character of the evil angels, revealed in Scripture, was in the least improved by our Saviour's coming, or that the character of the good angels stood in need of any amendment: and thus the notion conveyed by the phrase καινη κτισις, does not apply to a great part of the τα επι της γης, or to any of the τα εν τῳ ουρανῳ. The modern Socinians, aware of the force of this objection, have substituted in place of καινη κτισις, or rather have added to it what they call regulation. The evil angels, they say, are stripped of their power by Jesus, and he is placed at the head of the angelic host. But this is a figurative use of the word κτιζω, not warranted by the other expressions in the Epistles of Paul, where a new creation is meant; and if it be adopted here, by departing from the plain literal sense of εκτισθη, you are obliged in the same sentence to give it two figurative meanings, one reformation, applied to those inhabitants of earth who become by the Gospel "the workmanship of God, created unto good works;" the other regulation or subjection, applied to all

those beings whose character is not changed by the Gospel. It is plain then, that as the words themselves do not necessarily suggest a figurative sense, nothing is gained in point of easy or significant interpretation by forcing it upon them. But perhaps the context will justify it. In an extended allegory, the first sentence is generally obscure. But the primary and secondary sense are gradually unfolded by the art of the composition; and, when we look back to the beginning after having arrived at the end, the whole becomes clear. Here the case is totally different. In the eighteenth verse, Jesus is styled "the head of the body, the church," *i. e.* of those who were rescued by his blood out of the slavery of sin, and translated into his kingdom. The same word πρωτοτοκος, which had been applied to him in reference to πασης κτισεως, is there applied to him in reference to νεκρων, because he was the first that rose, or was brought forth out of the bowels of the earth, never to die any more; and as he was not only before the creation but produced it, so he was not only the first that rose, but also αρχη, the efficient cause of the resurrection of others. The Head, by rising, gave assurance that the members of the body should in due time be raised also. And thus, as the pronoun αυτος is the natural intimation that something else is to be said about the Person who had been mentioned before, so if you understand the sixteenth and seventeenth verses as expressing a literal creation, there is a striking analogy between the phrases that had been used upon that subject, and the phrases used upon the new subject in the eighteenth verse. And there seems to be a direct notice given, that the subjects are different, by the last clause of the eighteenth verse, ινα γενηται εν πασιν αυτος πρωτευων, by which means he might become the first in all things. He was the first in creation, both as existing before all creatures, and as having made them: He became after his death the first also in the scheme for the recovery of the world, because being the first that rose, he is the cause of the resurrection of others. Such is the light which a plain interpretation of the first three verses throws upon the context. If, on the other hand, you understand them figuratively, you are reminded as you advance in the context that the harsh interpretation, which you have been obliged to impose upon the

phrases contained in them, is not the true one, because by it you confound these three verses with the eighteenth; you lose the beauty in the analogy of the corresponding parts, and in the repetition of the word πρωτοτοκος; and you destroy entirely the meaning of the last clause of the eighteenth verse.

It appears, then, that according to those rules of interpretation, which a regard to perspicuity or ornament suggests, the Socinian sense of this passage is indefensible; and, therefore, it must be considered in the sense which naturally presents itself to every person who reads it, as a declaration that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the world; a declaration introduced most seasonably in this place, to exalt the dignity of the Author of the Gospel in the eyes of the new converts to that religion.

SECTION III.

HEBREWS I.

THE last passage which I mentioned as containing a full declaration that Jesus is the creator of the world, is the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I do not mean to give a particular commentary upon all the parts of that chapter, because many of them have no immediate connexion with our present object; but I shall state in general the purport of the apostle's argument, that you may see the propriety and significancy with which the declaration that we seek finds a place in this chapter.

The apostle is writing to Jews, who had embraced the Gospel, in order to furnish them with answers to those objections which their unbelieving countrymen urged against the new religion. The first source from which the answers are drawn is the superior dignity of the author of that religion. The law, indeed, was given from Mount Sinai by the ministry of angels; and the succession of prophets, who enlightened the Jewish nation, were messengers of heaven. But the various manifestations of himself, which

the Almighty had made in former times, πολυμερως και πολυτροπως, cannot claim so high a degree of reverence as that message which, in the last days, the time that had been announced as the conclusion of the law, was brought by a person more glorious than a prophet or an angel: Ον εθηκε κληρονομον παντων, δι' ου και τους αιωνας εποιησεν Ος ων απαυγασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου, φερων τε τα παντα τω ῥηματι της δυναμεως αυτου, δι' εαυτου καθαρισμον ποιησαμενος των αμαρτιων ημων, εκαθισεν εν δεξια της μεγαλωσυνης εν υψηλοις. This is the description given of that person, by whom, says the apostle, God in these last days hath spoken to us. When it is said of the King Eternal, εθηκε κληρονομον, we must understand this figurative expression in a sense consistent with his unchangeable glory, and such a sense is suggested by the ideas universally annexed to κληρονομος. The heir has an interest in the estate more intimate than that of any one person except the proprietor; and he may be intrusted with a degree of authority over it, because it cannot be supposed that he will abuse that which he is to possess. Hence, in the old Roman law, *hæres* and *dominus* were considered as equivalent terms. "Pro hærede gerere est pro domino gerere," says Justinian: and Paul, in allusion to this maxim of law, says, Gal. iv. 1, "The heir while he is a minor is under tutors," κυριος παντων ων.

Agreeably to this import of the word κληρονομος, Christians of every sect understand the expression here used to mean that God constituted Jesus Lord of all. They agree also, that his appointment to this sovereignty was declared to the world at his resurrection. The point upon which they differ is the character of Jesus before this appointment. Those who hold the first opinion concerning his person, that he is ψιλος ανθρωπος, consider the titles of honour, that are ascribed to him in Scripture, as flowing from his being constituted Lord of all things; and they endeavour to explain the first three verses in such a manner, as that they shall not seem to imply any original dignity of nature. He is called the Son of God, they say, because he is made heir or Lord of all. By him God regulated and reformed the world; or, understanding αιωνας, according to the literal import of the word, and its use in several places of Scripture, to denote the ages, and considering δι' ου as equivalent to δι' ον, they thus paraphrase the last clause of the second

verse; for whom, in respect to whom, in order to illustrate whose glory, when he should be constituted Lord of all, God disposed or ordered the ages: *i. e.* the antediluvian, the patriarchal, and the legal ages, all the divine dispensations towards the sons of men. They interpret the first two clauses of the third verse as expressions of that perfect representation of the divine perfections which appeared in the character of Jesus while he dwelt upon earth. Every one who saw that excellent man in whom the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God resided, saw the Father also. They apply the clause, upholding all things by the word of his power, to his transactions upon earth, that command over nature which was given him, and all those miracles by which he proved his divine commission, and established that dispensation which, having been opened by his preaching, and sealed by his death, is magnified in the eyes of men by the resurrection of its author, and by their knowing assuredly that he is set on the right hand of the throne of God, having obtained an authority and a rank superior to that of the angels.

There is an apparent consistency in this interpretation which renders it plausible. But when you weigh the several expressions here used, you will find that it is by no means adequate to their natural import. 1. Jesus is called the Son of God, whom he made heir, a construction which implies that he was the Son of God before his appointment to the sovereignty. 2. δι' οὐ και τους αιωνας εποιησεν are words that would not probably suggest to the first readers of this epistle either by whom God reformed the world, or by whom he disposed the ages. Some critics have thought the natural translation of them to be, by whom God made the angels, as it is likely that, before this epistle was written, the Gnostics used οἱ αιωνες to mark the multitude of spirits who were emanations from the supreme mind. But although this use of the word might be known to the apostle, we have no reason for thinking that it was at that time so familiar to Christians, that the apostle would choose, without any explication, to introduce it into an epistle written for the purpose of confirming their faith in the Gospel, more especially as another interpretation of these words could not fail readily to occur to their minds. We are told that οἱ αιωνες is equivalent to a Hebrew phrase, which the

ancient Jews employed to mark the whole extent of creation, divided by them into three parts, this lower world, the celestial bodies, and the third heavens, or habitation of God. The Greek word αιων, αει ων, was applied to the world as marking its duration in contradistinction to the short lives of many of its inhabitants. The word occurs often in the New Testament in this sense; and there is one passage which appears to be decisive of the meaning of this phrase. Heb. xi. 3, πιστει νοουμεν κατηρτισθαι τους αιωνας ῥημασι Θεου. If you join to this received use of αιωνας that εποιησε is the word used in the Septuagint translation of the first verse of Genesis, and that δια is one of the prepositions which we found in the Epistle to the Colossians, expressing the creation of all things by the Son, you will not be inclined to doubt that this clause contains another declaration to the same purpose; and when you so understand it, you see the reason of the particle και being introduced. The Son, whom God did "appoint heir of all, δι' ου και, by whom also," it is a further information concerning his person, no way implied in the appointment, and its being additional is marked by και, "he made the worlds." 3. According to this interpretation of δι' ου και τους αιωνας εποιησε, φερων τε τα παντα τῳ ῥημασι της δυναμεως αυτου, will naturally express his being the preserver and supporter of all things which he created, as the apostle to the Colossians had said, "by him all things consist." And, 4th, The first two clauses of the third verse, which are equivalent to the expression that we found there, εικων του Θεου του αοραστου, appear by their form, as well as their meaning, intended to convey additional information concerning the person of the Son, so that the amount of the third verse may be thus stated, the Son, appointed by God the Lord of all, by whom God created the world, who being originally a bright ray of the Father's glory, and the exact representation of his essence, and supporting without any fatiguing exertion all the things made by him, did in the last days appear to wash away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and, having accomplished this work, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It appears from this review of the first three verses, that besides the simple proposition which the Socinians find in them, that the man by whom God spoke in the last days

is now the Lord of all, they contain also farther intimation concerning this man, as being the Son of God, by whom he made the worlds. These farther intimations require proof, and they do not admit the same kind of proof with the simple proposition that he is now Lord of all. That was made manifest by the extraordinary gifts with which he endowed the first preachers of his religion, gifts sufficient to prove that all power in heaven and in earth is now given to him, but not sufficient to establish with certainty any conclusion, which extends to his state previous to the time of his receiving that power. As there is thus occasion for proving the further intimations concerning the person of Christ, which we have found in the first three verses, it is natural to look for that proof in the remaining part of the chapter, which seems at first reading to relate to the same subject; and the proof is formally introduced by the fourth verse. Τοσουτῳ κρειττων γενομενος των αγγελων, ὁσῳ διαφορωτερον παρ' αυτους κεκληρονομηκεν ονομα, which may be literally rendered thus: "being as far superior to the angels as the name which he hath inherited is more excellent than theirs." The point to be proved is not that he is now superior to the angels; that is self-evident, if he be Lord of all; but that the name which he has inherited as always belonging to him, and the characters by which he has been announced in the former revelations of God, imply a pre-eminence over the angels corresponding to his present exaltation. This point, a proof of which the train of the apostle's argument requires, is fully established in the following verses, in the manner most satisfactory to the Hebrews, by a reference to their own Scriptures. I shall just mark the steps of the proof, without staying to illustrate fully the several quotations.

1. He is called the Son of God, with an emphasis which is never applied to any other being. Of the two citations in the fifth verse, the one is taken from Psalm ii. which the Jews considered as a prophecy of the Messiah; the other from a message which the prophet Nathan brought to David, 1 Chron. xvii. 11—14. There is no mention in that message of the Messiah, but there are these words, which point to a greater than Solomon. "And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons. I will be his Father,

and he shall be my Son; and I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever."

2. The Psalmist represents the Son as the object of worship to angels. 6. Οταν δε παλιν εισαγαγῃ τον πρωτοτοκον εις την οικουμενην, λεγει· Και προσκυνησατωσαν αυτῳ παντες αγγελοι Θεου. The repetition of the adverb παλιν is the common method by which the apostle introduces a succession of quotations. It is therefore a very forced construction which has been given to this verse, "When he bringeth again the first begotten, when he raiseth him from the dead." The command is taken from the Septuagint translation of Psalm xcvii. The psalm appears to relate to God the Father. But we are taught by the authority of the apostle, in this citation, to apply it to the Son. "When God bringeth in the first begotten, *i. e.* when he announceth his coming into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him."

3. The pre-eminence of the Son over the angels is inferred from the very different language which is employed in relation to the angels and him. Προς μεν τους αγγελους λεγει. Προς δε τον υἱον. 7, 8, 9. The angels are spoken of as servants; the Son is addressed by the name of God, as a king, whose throne is everlasting. The quotations are taken from Psalms civ. and xlv. which the Jews were accustomed to apply to the Messiah. Although it be not very much to my present purpose, I cannot avoid mentioning an ingenious criticism on the 7th verse, which is found in Grotius, which was adopted by Dr Lowth in his elegant book De Sacrâ Poësi Hebræorum, and is illustrated by Dr Campbell in one of his critical dissertations. Three authorities so respectable claim our attention. It is not easy to affix any meaning to the seventh verse, which both in this place, and in Psalm civ. is thus rendered, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." But the Hebrew as well as the Greek word for spirits may be translated "winds," and αγγελος is the general word for "messenger;" so that the verse admits of a translation most agreeable to the context in Psalm civ. "Who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh the winds his messenger, and the flaming fire his servant," *i. e.* who employs wind and fire to accomplish his purposes.

This meaning enters most naturally into the Psalm, which celebrates the glory of God as it appears in the material creation, and, if adopted here, contributes very much to the force of the apostle's reasoning, by the improvement which it makes upon the sense of the quotation. "So little sacredness is there in the name Angels, that it is applied in Scripture to inanimate objects, storm, and lightning. But so sacred is the name of the Son, that the Person who bears it is addressed by the Almighty as an everlasting King. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

There is one objection to this change which I was very much surprised to find the minute accuracy of Dr. Campbell had omitted to mention. It is contrary to the rule to which I referred when speaking of these words, Θεος ην ὁ λογος, that in Greek the predicate is commonly distinguished from the subject of a proposition by being without the article, more especially when the predicate stands first; νυξ ἡ ἡμερα εγενετο. I doubt not that it was a regard to this rule which led our translators of the Old and New Testament to adopt a dark expression instead of an obvious one. I believe that this distinction between the predicate and the subject of a proposition is observed with very few exceptions; and much advantage arises from the observance of it. At the same time, as the rule is founded merely upon practice, and not, as far as I know, upon any thing essential to the constitution of the language; and as, in the best writers, anomalous expressions sometimes occur, it does not appear to me that the place of the article in this verse is a sufficient reason for rejecting a translation which is so striking an improvement.

4. The fourth quotation, 10, 11, 12, is taken from Psalm cii. There is not in that psalm any direct mention of the Son of God. But if you admit that the books of the New Testament are inspired, you cannot suppose that the apostle was mistaken in applying these words; and, therefore, the only question is, Whether he does apply them to Jesus Christ. The succession of quotations leads you to expect this application, for there would be an abruptness inconsistent both with elegance and perspicuity, if between the third and the fifth quotations, both of which are addressed to the Son, there should be introduced, without any intimation of the change, one addressed to the

Father; and all the attempts to establish a connexion made by those who consider it as thus addressed are so forced and unnatural, as to satisfy us that they are mistaken. You may judge of the rest by that attempt which is the latest, and is really the most plausible. Those, then, who consider the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses, as addressed to God the Father, endeavour to prepare for this application of the words by translating the beginning of the 8th verse in a manner which the syntax admits, although it creates a very harsh figure. "Unto the Son, he saith, God is thy throne for ever," *i. e.* the support of thy throne. As it is said by God to the Messiah, Psalm lxxxix. 4, "I will build up thy throne to all generations." And they consider the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses as introduced to show the unchangeableness of that God who is the support of the Messiah's throne. It shall endure for ever; for that Lord who hath promised to support it has laid the foundations of the earth, and remains the same after the heavens are dissolved. And thus the apostle is made to interrupt a close argument by bringing in three verses, in order to prove what nobody denied, that God is unchangeable. The question is not whether God be able to fulfil his promise. That was admitted by all the Hebrews, whether they received the Gospel or not. But the question is, what God had promised and declared to the Messiah: and, therefore, these three verses, according to the interpretation now given of them, may be taken away without hurting the apostle's argument, or detracting in the least from the information conveyed concerning the person of Christ. On the other hand, if, following the train of the apostle's reasoning, you consider this quotation as addressed to the same person with the third and fifth, it is a proof of that assertion in the end of the 2d verse, δι' οὐ καὶ τοὺς αἰωνας ἐποιησε, of which no proof had hitherto been adduced; and it is a direct proof of such a kind that it cannot be evaded. For the figurative sense, given by the Socinians to the passage in the Colossians, will not avail them here, because the heavens and the earth spoken of in this place are to perish, and wax old like a garment. But the kingdom of righteousness, which Isaiah expressed by new heavens and a new earth, shall endure for ever. The number of its subjects is continually increasing; and

they who are "the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, created unto good works," shall shine for ever with unfading lustre in the kingdom of their Father. The material, not the moral creation, shall be changed; and, therefore, the material creation must be meant by that earth and those heavens, which are said to be the work of the Lord here addressed.

5. The original pre-eminence of Jesus Christ is inferred, in the last place, from the manner in which the promise of that dominion, which was to be given him, is expressed in the Old Testament. The quotation in the 13th verse is taken from Psalm cx. which the ancient Jews always applied to the Messiah. It contains a promise which was fulfilled in the Son's being appointed Lord of all things, and in his sitting down on the right hand of the majesty on high. The argument turns upon the style of this promise. A seat on the right is in all countries the place of honour; and when the Almighty says to the Messiah, "Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool," the address conveys to our minds an impression of the dignity of the person upon whom so distinguished an honour was conferred, as well as of the stability and perpetuity of his kingdom. The Almighty never spoke in this manner to any angel. They do not sit at his right hand. They are spirits employed in public works, sent forth at his pleasure in different services. They are not the servants of men. But the services appointed them by God are *δια τους μελλοντας κληρονομειν σωτηριαν*, upon account of, for the benefit of, those who are to inherit eternal life. The Son, on the other hand, remains in the highest place of honour, without ministration, till those who resist his dominion be completely subdued.

There arises from this review of the latter part of the chapter, the strongest presumption that we gave a right interpretation of the first three verses. For if we consider the apostle as there stating the original pre-eminence of the person who is now appointed Lord of all, we find the most exact correspondence between the positions laid down at the beginning, and the proofs of them adduced in the sequel: whereas if, by a forced interpretation of some phrases in the first three verses, we consider them as stating simply the dominion of Christ, without any respect to

his having been in the beginning the Son of God, and the Creator of the world, we are reminded, as we advance, of the violence which we did to the sense of the author, by meeting with quotations which we know not how to apply to that simple proposition to which we had restricted his meaning.

SECTION IV.

HAVING now found in Scripture full and explicit declarations that Christ is the Creator of the world, I shall direct your attention to the amount of that proposition, before I proceed to the other actions that are ascribed to Jesus in his pre-existent state.

The three passages that have been illustrated are a clear refutation of the first opinion concerning the person of Christ. If he was the Creator of the world, he cannot be ψιλος ανθρωπος. But it is not obvious how far this proposition decides the question between the second and third opinions, whether he be the first and most exalted creature of God, or whether he be truly and essentially God. It has, indeed, been said by a succession of theological writers, from the Ante-Nicene fathers to the present day, that creation, *i. e.* the bringing things out of nothing to a state of being, is an incommunicable act of Omnipotence; that a creature may be employed in giving a new form to what has been already made, but that creation must be the work of God himself; so that its being ascribed in Scripture to Jesus Christ is a direct proof that he is God.

It appears to me upon all occasions most unbecoming and presumptuous for us to say what God can do, and what he cannot do: and I shall never think that the truth or the importance of a conclusion warrants any degree of irreverence in the method of attaining it. The power exerted in making the most insignificant object out of nothing by a word is manifestly so unlike the greatest

human exertions, that we have no hesitation in pronouncing that it could not proceed from the strength of man; and when we take into view the immense extent, and magnificence, and beauty of the things thus created, the different orders of spirits, as well as the frame of the material world, our conceptions of the power exerted in creation are infinitely exalted. But we have no means of judging whether this power must be exerted immediately by God, or whether it may be delegated by him to a creature. It is certain that God has no need of any minister to fulfil his pleasure. He may do by himself every thing that is done throughout the universe. Yet we see that in the ordinary course of providence he withdraws himself, and employs the ministry of other beings; and we believe that, at the first appearance of the Gospel, men were enabled by the divine power residing in them to perform miracles, *i. e.* such works as man cannot do, to cure the most inveterate diseases by a word, without any application of human art, and to raise the dead. Although none of these acts imply a power equal to creation, yet as all of them imply a power more than human, they destroy the general principle of that argument, upon which creation is made an unequivocal proof of deity in him who creates. And it becomes a very uncertain conjecture, whether reasons perfectly unknown to us might not induce the Almighty to exert, by the ministry of a creature, powers exceeding in any given degree those by which the apostles of Jesus raised the dead.

But although I do not adopt the language of those who presume to say that the Almighty cannot employ a creature in creating other creatures, there appears to me, from the nature of the thing, a strong probability that this work was not accomplished by the ministry of a creature; and when to this probability is joined the manner in which the Scriptures uniformly speak of creation, and the style of those passages in which creation is ascribed to Jesus, there seems to arise from this simple proposition, that Christ is the Creator of the world, a conclusive argument that he is God.

I. A strong probability, from the nature of the thing, that the work of creation was not accomplished by the ministry of a creature. By creation we attain the know-

ledge of God. In a course of fair reasoning, proceeding upon the natural sentiments of the human mind, we infer from the existence of a world which was made the existence of a Being who is without beginning. But this reasoning is interrupted, in a manner of which the light of nature gives no warning, if that work which to us is the natural proof of a Being who exists necessarily, was accomplished by a creature, *i. e.* by one who owes his being, the manner of his being, and the degree of his power, entirely to the will of another. By this intervention of a creature between the true God and the creation, we are brought back to the principles of Gnosticism, which separated the Creator of the world from the Supreme God; and the necessary consequence of considering the Creator of the world as a creature is, that, instead of the security and comfort which arise from the fundamental principle of sound theism, we are left in uncertainty with regard to the wisdom and power of the Creator, to entertain a suspicion that he may not have executed in the best manner that which was committed to him, that he may be unable to preserve his work from destruction or alteration, and that some future arrangement may substitute in place of all that he has made, another world more fair, or other inhabitants more perfect. It is not probable that the uncertainty and suspicion, which necessarily adhere to all the modifications of the Gnostic system, would be adopted in a Divine Revelation; that a doctrine which combats many particular errors of Gnosticism would interweave into its constitution this radical defect, and would pollute the source of virtue and consolation which natural religion opens, by teaching us that the heavens and the earth are the work, not of the God and Father of all, but of an inferior minister of his power, removed, as every creature must be, at an infinite distance from his glory.

II. This presumption, which, however strong it appears, would not of itself warrant us to form any conclusion, is very much confirmed, when we attend to the manner in which the Scriptures uniformly speak of creation. You will recollect that, in the Old Testament, Maker of heaven and earth is the characteristic of the true God, by which he is distinguished from idols. "The Lord," says Jeremiah, "is the true God; he is the living God, and an

everlasting King. The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Jer. x. 10, 11, 12. Creation is uniformly spoken of as the work of God alone.* And it is stated as the proof of his being, and the ground of our trust in him.† "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all."‡ I have selected only a few striking passages. But they accord with the whole strain of the poetical books of the Old Testament: and the apostle Paul states the argument contained in them, when he says to the Romans, i. 20. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The things made by God are to us the exhibition of his eternal power: and a few verses after, when he is speaking of the worship of the heathen, the form of his expression intimates that no being intervenes between the creature and the Creator. "They served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." *τον κτισαντα, ὁς εστιν ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας.* I have only to add, that the book of Revelation states creation as the ground of that praise which is offered by the angels in heaven. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."§

III. The style of the three passages of the New Testament, in which creation is ascribed to Jesus Christ, does not admit of our considering him as a creature. In the

* Job xxxviii. Isaiah xl. 12; xliv. 24.
† Isaiah xl. 26. Jer. xiv. 22. ‡ Psalm, xix. xcv. civ.
§ Rev. iv. 10, 11.

first of the three passages Jesus is called God. It is admitted that the word God is used in Scripture in an inferior sense, to denote an idol, which exists only in the imagination of him by whom it is worshipped as a god, and to denote a man raised by office far above others. But it has been justly observed, that the arrangement of John's words renders it impossible to affix any other than the highest sense to Θεος in this place. In the first verse of John, the last word of the preceding clause is made the first of that which follows. Εν αρχη ην ο λογος, και ο λογος ην προς τον Θεον, και Θεος ην ο λογος. There must be a purpose to mislead, in a writer who with this arrangement has a different meaning to Θεος at the end of the second, and at the beginning of the third clause. The want of the article is of no importance. For in the sixth verse of that chapter, and in numberless other places, Θεος without the article, is applied to God the Father. In the second passage Jesus is called εικων του Θεου του αορατου. And in the third απαυγασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτηρ της υποστασεως αυτου, phrases which must be understood in a sense very far removed from the full import of the figure, unless they imply a sameness of nature. In the second passage, it is said that all things were made δι' αυτου, a phrase which might apply to a creature whom the Almighty chose to employ as his minister. But it is said in the same passage, that they were made εις αυτον, which signifies that he was much more than an instrument, and that his glory was an end for which things were made. It is said also, τα παντα εν αυτω συνεστηκε, which implies that his power is not occasional and precarious, but that he is able to preserve what he has made, and so may be an object of trust to his creatures. In the third passage it is said that God made the worlds by the Son. But the quotation from the Psalms adduced in proof of this position, represents the Son as the Creator; and as in no degree susceptible of the changes to which his works are subject. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

When you take, in conjunction with the strong probability that the Creator of the world is not a creature, the language of the New Testament, where creation is ascribed

to Jesus, you discover the traces of a system which reconciles the apparent discordance. Jesus Christ is essentially God, always with the Father, united with him in nature, in perfections, in counsel, and in operations.—"Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* The Father acts by the Son, and the Son, in creating the world, displayed that power and Godhead which from eternity resided in him. If this system be true, then creation, the characteristical mark of the Almighty, may, in perfect consistency with the passages quoted from the Old Testament, be ascribed to Jesus, because, although the Father is said to have created the world by him, upon account of the union in all their operations, yet he is not a creature subservient to the will of another, but himself "the everlasting God the Creator of the ends of the earth." This system is delivered in the earliest Christian writers. "The Father had no need," they say, "of the assistance of angels to make the things which he had determined to be made; for the Son and the Spirit are always with him, by whom and in whom he freely made all things, to whom he speaks when he says, Let *us* make man after our image; and who are one with him, because it is added, So God created man in his own image."†

We require more evidence than we have yet attained, before we can pronounce that this system is true. You will only bear in mind, that it is suggested in all the passages of the New Testament which give an account of the creation of the world by Jesus Christ; and that if it shall appear to be supported by sufficient evidence, it reconciles that account with the natural impressions of the human mind, and the declarations of Scripture concerning the extent of power and the supremacy of character implied in the act of creation.

* John v. 19. † Irenæus. lib. iv. cap. 20, edit. Massuet.

CHAP. V.

ACTIONS ASCRIBED TO JESUS IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE.

Administration of Providence.

THOSE passages, from which we learn that Jesus is the Creator of the world, taught us also to consider him as the preserver of all the things which he made. This last character implies a continued agency, and resolves all that care of Providence, by which the creatures have been supported from the beginning, into actions performed by Jesus in a state of pre-existence. There is nothing in the ordinary course of nature which indicates the agency of this person; there is no part of the principles of natural religion which requires that we should distinguish his agency from the power of the Almighty Father of all; and therefore the Scriptures, in speaking of those interpositions of Providence which respect the material world, and the life of the different animals, are not accustomed to direct our attention particularly to that Person, by whom the divine power is exerted. But they do intimate that the particular economy of Providence, which respects the restoration of the human race, was administered in all ages by that Person, by whose manifestation it was accomplished: and upon these intimations is founded an opinion which, since the days of the apostles, has been held by almost every Christian writer who admits the pre-existence of Jesus, that he, who in the fulness of time was made flesh, appeared to the patriarchs, gave the law from mount Sinai, spake by the prophets, and maintained the whole of that intercourse with mankind, which is record-

ed in the Old Testament as preparatory to the coming of the Messiah.

The early date of this opinion, and the general consent with which it has been received, the frequent mention made of it in theological books, the uniformity which it gives to the conduct of the great plan of redemption, and the extent of that information which it promises to open, all conspire to draw our attention to it, and induce me to lay before you the grounds upon which it rests. They consist not of explicit declarations of Scripture, sufficient by themselves to establish the opinion, but of an induction of particulars, which, although they may escape careless readers, seem intended to unfold to those who search the Scriptures, a view both of that active love towards the human race which characterizes the Saviour of the world, and of the original dignity of his person.

The general principles of this opinion are these. God, the Father, is represented in Scripture as "invisible, whom no man hath seen at any time." But it is often said in the Old Testament that the patriarchs, the prophets, and the people saw God; and there is an case, a familiarity of intercourse in many of the scenes which are recorded, inconsistent with the awful majesty of him who covereth himself with thick clouds. The God of Israel, whom the people saw, is often called an angel, *i. e.* a person sent; therefore he cannot be God the Father, for it is impossible that the Father should be sent by any one. But he is also called Jehovah. The highest titles, the most exalted actions, and the most entire reverence are appropriated to him. Therefore he cannot be a being of an inferior order. And the only method in which we can reconcile the seeming discordance is, by supposing that he is the Son of God, who, as we learn from John, "was in the beginning with God, and was God," who being at a particular time "made flesh," and so manifested in the human nature, may be conceived, without irreverence, to have manifested himself at former times in different ways. This supposition, suggested by the language of the Old Testament, seems to be confirmed by the words of our Lord, John vi. 46, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father;" and of his apostle, John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only be-

gotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The meaning of this passage extends to the former declarations of God under the Old Testament. For it is remarkable that it is not the preterperfect tense which is used in the original, but the aorist, which intimates that he, "who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him" also in times past. He who alone was qualified to declare God, who certainly did declare him by the Gospel, and who is styled by the apostle, "the image of the invisible God," as the person in whom the glory of the Godhead appeared to man, seems to be pointed out as the angel who was called by the name of God in ancient times.

These general principles receive a striking illustration when we attend to the detail of the appearances recorded in the Old Testament, because we find upon examination that all the divine appearances, made in a succession of ages, are referred to one person, who is often called in the same passage both Angel and Jehovah, and that several incidental expressions in the New Testament mark out Christ to be this person.

SECTION I.

ALL APPEARANCES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT REFERRED TO ONE PERSON, CALLED ANGEL AND GOD.

In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, it is said that "the Lord," which, when written in capital letters, is always the translation of Jehovah, that "Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre;" and the manner of the appearance is very particularly related. "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and three men stood by him." He received them hospitably, according to the manner of the times. In the course of the interview one of the three speaks with the authority of God, promises such blessings as God only can bestow, and is called by the historian Jehovah. Two of the men departed and "went toward Sodom, but Abraham," it is said, "stood yet before the Lord." He inquires

of him respectfully about the fate of Sodom; he reasons with him as the Judge of all the earth, who has it in his power to save and to destroy; and we may judge of the impressions which he now has of the nature of the man, whom a little before he had received in his tent, when he says to him, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." It is the same Lord, whom Abraham saw in this manner, that appeared to him at other times, and, after his death, to his son Isaac; for a reference is made in the future appearances to the promise that had been made at this time. To Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, the Lord appeared upon different occasions, under the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac, *i. e.* the God who had blessed them; he repeats to Jacob what he had said to them, that his posterity should possess the land of Canaan, and become a great nation, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, xxviii. 13, 14. Jacob, after one appearance, said, "I have seen God face to face," xxxii. 30; after another, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and he called the name of the place Bethel," *i. e.* the house of God, xxviii. 16—19. He raised a pillar; he vowed a vow to the God whom he had seen, and at his return he paid the vow. Yet this God, to whom he gave these divine honours, and of whom he spoke at some times as Jehovah the God of Abraham and Isaac, at other times he calls an angel. "The angel of God," he says, "spake unto me in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel," xxxi. 11—13; and upon his death-bed he gives in the same sentence the name of God and angel to this person, xlviii. 15. "He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." The prophet Hosea refers in one place to the earnestness with which Jacob begged a blessing from the Lord who appeared to him, which is called in Genesis his wrestling with a man and prevailing. So says Hosea, xii. 2—5. "By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial."

The same person is called in this passage God, the angel, and the Lord God of hosts.

In Exodus iii. we read, that when Moses came to Horeb, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." Moses turned about to see this sight, "And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people." You will observe in this passage an interchange of the names angel and God, a reference to the former appearances which the patriarchs had seen, and a connexion established between this appearance and the subsequent manifestations to the children of Israel; so that the person whom Abraham saw in the plains of Mamre, and who brought Israel out of Egypt, is declared to be the same. Moses asks the name by which he should call the God who had thus come down to deliver the children of Israel. "And God said, I am that I am: thou shalt say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you." This very particular mode of expression is intended to be the interpretation of Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, implying his necessary, eternal, and unchangeable existence. Other beings may be, or may not be. There was a time when they were not; the will of him who called them into existence may annihilate them; and even while they continue to exist, there may be such alterations upon the manner of their being, as to make them appear totally different from what they once were. But God always was, and always will be, that which he now is; and the name which distinguishes him from every other being, and is truly expressive of his character, is this, εγω ειμι ὁ ων.

It is very remarkable that in the same passage in which the person who appeared to Moses assumed this significant phrase as his name, he is called by the historian, the

angel of the Lord; and Stephen, Acts vii. 30, 35, in relating this history before the Jewish Sanhedrim, shows the sense of his countrymen upon this point, by repeating twice the word *angel*. "There appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire." And again, "This Moses did God send to be a ruler and deliverer by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." Stephen says most accurately that Moses was sent to be a ruler and deliverer by the hands of this angel; for it was the same angel who appeared to him in the bush; that put a rod in his hand wherewith to do wonders before Pharaoh; that brought forth the people with an out-stretched arm, and led them through the wilderness. Accordingly, Exod. xiii. 21, we read, "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire." In the next chapter, xiv. 19, we read, "The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them." The same Jehovah who led them out of Egypt gave them the law from Mount Sinai; for we read, Exod. xx. 1, 2, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Our attention is thus carried back by the preface of the law to that appearance which Moses had seen; and accordingly Stephen says, Acts vii. 38, "Moses was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina." An angel then spake to Moses in Mount Sinai, yet this angel in giving the law takes to himself the name of Jehovah. The first commandment is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me:" and Moses, when he recites in Deuteronomy the manner of giving the law, says expressly that God had given it; iv. 33, 36, 39, "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. Know, therefore, this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else."

All the interpositions recorded in the Pentateuch, by which the enemies of the children of Israel were put to flight, and the people were safely conducted to the land of

Canaan, are referred to the same person, who is often called the angel of the Lord that went before them. Moses, who begins the blessing which he pronounced upon the children of Israel before his death with these words, Deut. xxxiii. "The Lord came from Mount Sinai," seems to intend to connect the first appearance, which this Lord made to him in Horeb, with every subsequent manifestation of divine favour, when, in speaking of Joseph, he calls the blessing of God for which he prays, "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." During a succession of ages all the affairs of the Jewish nation were administered with the attention and tenderness which might be expected from a tutelary deity, or guardian angel, to whom that province was specially committed; and the prophet Isaiah has expressed that protection amidst danger, that support and relief in all their distresses, which the people had experienced from his guardianship, in these beautiful words, Isaiah lxiii. 7, 9: "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Yet we are guarded in other places against degrading the God of Israel to a level with the inferior deities to whom the nations offered their worship. "Where are their gods," says the Lord by Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36—40, "their rock in whom they trusted? See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever." And Isaiah xliv. 6: "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." This is the language in which the God of Israel speaks of himself, and in which he is addressed by the people through all the books of the Old Testament; and in the long addresses, several of which are recorded, the high characters which distinguish the true God are conjoined with the manifestations in former times, of which I have been giving the history, in such a manner as to show that both are applied to the same person. One of the most striking examples is the solemn thanksgiving and

prayer offered, Nehemiah, ch. ix. by all the congregation of Israel, who returned from the Babylonish captivity, in consequence of the edict of Cyrus the Great. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abraham,—and madest a covenant with him,—and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,—and didst divide the sea before them,—and leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire. Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven—yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness," &c. There is no interruption, no change of person in the progress of this prayer, so that we must suppose a delusion to run through the whole of the Old Testament, unless the Creator of heaven and earth be the same person whom Jacob, and Moses, and Isaiah, and Stephen, call the Angel of the Lord.

In order to connect all the intimations which the Old Testament gives concerning the God of Israel, you must carry this along with you, that the person who appeared to Moses, and who gave the law from Mount Sinai, commanded the people to make him a sanctuary, that he might dwell amongst them. The command was given to Moses at the time when he went up into the midst of the cloud that abode upon Mount Sinai, and when the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. At this time Moses received from God the pattern of the ark of the tabernacle, and of the mercy-seat on the top of the ark, having cherubims which covered the mercy-seat with their wings, and looked towards one another. "Thou shalt put," said God, "the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims, of all things which I will give thee in commandment to the children of Israel," Exod. xxv. 21. As soon as the tabernacle was reared, and the ark with these appurtenances was brought into it, "a cloud covered

the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." This cloud was the guide of the children of Israel in their journeyings. When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, they went on; when it was not taken up, they rested; and you may judge how intimately they connected the appearance of the ark with the presence of God, from the words recorded, Numb. x. 35, 36, as used by Moses in the name of the congregation. The ark of the Lord, it is said, went before them. "And when it set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Wheresoever the ark was, the God of Israel was conceived to be. In that place he met with his people. There they consulted him in all their exigencies; and the glory which filled the tabernacle, called the Shechinah, was the visible symbol of the presence of the God of Israel. When Solomon built a temple, he introduced into it the ark and the tabernacle. And the joy which he felt in accomplishing that work arose from his having found a fixed habitation for that sacred pledge of the divine favour which had often been exposed to danger, which had for some time been in the possession of the enemy, but which every devout Israelite regarded as the glory and security of his nation. In Psalm cxxxii., which appears to have been composed to celebrate the introduction of the ark into the temple, you find these words: "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou, and the ark of thy strength. The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell." In the solemn prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, 1 Kings vi. it is declared to be a house built for the Lord God of Israel, who had made a covenant with their fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. As soon as the ark was brought into its place in the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. To this place all the prayers and services of the people in succeeding generations were directed. The Lord was known by this name, Jehovah the God of Israel, who dwelleth between the cherubims. And hence arises the significancy of that prayer of the good king Jehoshaphat, when he stood in the house of the

Lord before the new court, 2 Chron. xx. 7, 8. "O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? and they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name."

These circumstances also explain to us various expressions in the book of Psalms, which, without attending to them, appear unintelligible. The Psalms were the hymns composed for the service of the temple. The particular occasions upon which several of them were composed are mentioned in the Old Testament history. And many of them have a special reference to that principle which was incorporated into the very constitution of the Jewish state, that the peculiar residence of the God of Israel was in the ark, and that his presence was manifested by a visible glory encompassed with clouds, and shining sometimes with a dazzling splendour which none could approach; sometimes with a milder lustre which encouraged the servants of the sanctuary to draw nigh. Ps. lxxvi. 1. "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling in Zion." Ps. xcix. 1. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved." Many of the Psalms, by their reference to events in the history of the Jewish nation, show us that the God who was worshipped in the sanctuary, is the same who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who appeared on Mount Sinai, and led his people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Psalms lxxviii. cv. and cvi. contain an historical detail, and Psalm lxviii. confirms in a striking manner the glory in which God appeared in the sanctuary with his former manifestations to Israel. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. They have seen thy goings, O God, my king, in the sanctuary. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents to thee. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places." While the Psalms thus bring together the former events in the history of

Israel, and the glory of their God in the sanctuary, they address this person as Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, who made the world and the fulness thereof, the mighty God, the king and judge of all the earth, whom the angels worship, and who alone is to be feared.

The view of the information contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, concerning the person by whom the law was given, will be complete when it is added, in the last place, that the writings of the later prophets represent him also as the Saviour of Israel, and the author of a new dispensation, which was to be introduced in the last days. The interpositions of the God of Israel, to deliver them out of the many national calamities which mark their history, do by no means exhaust the meaning of the prophecies and thanksgivings, which abound in the sacred books of the Jews. The expressions even of the earlier writers bear a more exalted sense than is attained by explaining them of any temporal mercies. And about the time of the captivity of the nation, and of their return to their own land, the prophets, in some places, speak plainly of a spiritual deliverance, and in others adopt a richness of imagery, which is unmeaning and even ridiculous, unless it be understood to point to the days of the Messiah. But the clearest intimations of the future glorious dispensation are always conjoined with the mention of its being accomplished by that very person who was the God of Israel. Isaiah sometimes represents the Almighty as himself the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel: at other times, he speaks of a servant, an elect of God, who was to be mighty to save. But this elect is distinguished by such names, Immanuel, *i. e.* God with us, the mighty God, the Prince of peace: and his character and appearance are described with such majesty, that we soon recognise the God of Israel, for whom the people are commanded to wait. Later prophets give the name of Jehovah to the person who was to be employed in bringing the salvation. Zech. ii. 10, 11. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee." Here is one Jehovah sending another to dwell in Judah. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah," Hosea i. 7, "and will save them by

the Lord their God." Micah v. 2. foretells a "ruler in Israel that was to come out of Bethlehem," not a new person, but one "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Jeremiah says expressly that the new covenant with Israel was to be made by the same person who had made the old. Jer. xxxi. 31. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." In reference to the covenant mentioned by Jeremiah, Malachi, the last of the prophets, announces the coming of the Messiah in these words, Mal. iii. 1: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." The Lord coming to his own temple is the God of Israel returning to illuminate and glorify by his presence that Jewish temple, which had been originally built for his name, but which, after the destruction of the fabric erected by Solomon, had been left without the Shechinah, the visible symbol of his presence. By his coming, the glory of the latter house, according to the prophecy of Haggai,* was made greater than the glory of the former, because no symbol, however sacred or splendid, deserved to be compared with the actual presence, and inhabitation of the Lord of glory. The Lord coming to his own temple is called in this prophecy the Angel or Messenger of the covenant, in whom the Jews delighted, *i. e.* a person sent by another for the purpose of making that new covenant with the house of Israel, which their sacred books taught them to expect. Here, then, we are brought back, at the end of the Old Testament, to the same word Angel or Messenger, which we found at the beginning of it. The

* Hagg. ii. 9.

Angel, who had appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Moses, who had made the old covenant with Israel, who had been worshipped in his own temple at Jerusalem, is here called the Angel of the covenant which was to be established upon better promises. The conjunction of names in this concluding prophecy collects all the information concerning this person, which we have found scattered through the Old Testament, and seems to be introduced on purpose to teach us, that he who had conducted the former dispensation was to open the new; that the same person, by whom the whole plan of Divine Providence respecting the souls of men had been carried on from the beginning of the world, was to visit the Jewish temple before it was demolished a second time; and having received the adorations of that people whom he had chosen in the temple, which was his own during all the time that it stood, was to be entitled by another manifestation, and a fresh display of his love, to adorations and thanksgivings corresponding to the nature and extent of the blessings conveyed by the new covenant.

This singular prophecy, which collects all the information concerning the person of whom we have been speaking, is found in the conclusion of the Old Testament; and in the beginning of the New it is applied by Mark to Jesus Christ. This application is a favourable omen of the success to be expected in the second part of this discussion, in which I propose to show, that, as all the divine appearances made in a succession of ages are referred in the Old Testament to one person, who is called both Angel and Jehovah, so many incidental expressions in the New Testament mark out Christ to be this person.

SECTION II.

THERE is no passage in the New Testament which directly affirms that every thing said in the Old Testament of that Person who is called both Angel and Jehovah belongs to Christ. But this is not the only instance in which the intimate connection between the two dispensations is left

to be gathered by those who inquire. There are many parts of the counsel of God, with respect to which, as the Apostle speaks, to those whose minds are blinded, the veil remains untaken away in reading the Old Testament. And it does not appear unworthy of the wisdom of God to have provided in this way a reward for that industry which is directed to the Scriptures, a satisfaction to speculative minds, and an increase of the evidence of Christianity, according to the progress which men make in sacred knowledge.

In the progress of this part of the discussion, you will have a specimen of what the Apostle calls "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," in order to "know the things that are freely given us of God." You will find the proof consisting of a number of detached circumstances. But you will not, upon that account, think it incomplete. Circumstantial evidence is often resorted to in human affairs. There are many occasions upon which it is not judged worthy of less credit than the most direct testimony; and, with regard to the particular object of this discussion, if we are attentive and patient in the interpretation of Scripture, the sentiments of the apostles, whose writings are the standard of our faith, may be as certainly known from the manner in which they have expressed themselves at many different times, as if any of them had judged it proper formally to show that Christ is the Jehovah who appeared to the patriarchs, who was worshipped in the temple, and who was announced as the author of a new dispensation.

In collecting the evidence of this whole proposition, it is natural to invert the order in which I brought forward the different parts of it. For Christ is known in the New Testament as the author of the new dispensation. That is the character under which we find him there. The first thing, therefore, to be derived from thence, is an answer to this question, whether the terms in which the author of the new dispensation was announced under the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New. If they are, we should be warranted to infer, from the induction of particulars formerly stated, that he was also worshipped in the temple, and that he appeared to the patriarchs. But our faith in the whole proposition will be very much confirmed, if, in-

dependently of that proof of the second and third facts which necessarily arises from the proof of the third, we find them also established by separate evidence.

I. It appears from various expressions in the New Testament that Christ is Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel, who was announced in the Old Testament as the author of a new dispensation. The allusions that occur in the New Testament to expressions in the Old respecting the Saviour of Israel are infinite in number, and constitute a striking illustration of this part of the general proposition. But there are two heads under which we may arrange those passages, which afford the most conclusive proof that Christ is the person who was thus announced. The first is the application made in the New Testament of the prophecies respecting the forerunner of Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel; and the second is a number of quotations, from a long prophecy of Isaiah, that extends from the seventh to the twelfth chapter.

1. Application of the prophecies respecting the forerunner of Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel. The first two verses of Mark's Gospel are these: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee;" and the same prophecy is applied in Matthew and Luke to John Baptist. The words are taken, with a small variation, from Malachi iii. 1. In the prophet, the person whose messenger was to prepare the way before him speaks, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." In the Gospels, the Almighty speaks to the person, whose way the messenger was to prepare. "I send my messenger before thy face." As the passage is literally the same in all the three Gospels, the variation from the present reading of the Old Testament was probably occasioned by some version or copy of the Hebrew, different from any now extant. The amount of the prophecy is the same, and the fulfilment equally exact, whether you read "before me," or "before thee;" and the direct application to John the Baptist of the first part of the verse in Malachi, is a clear warrant to apply the second part of the verse to Jesus, the person before whom John went, *i. e.* to consider Jesus as Jehovah coming to his own temple, the messenger of the

covenant, whom the Jews were taught by the later prophets to expect. This inference, legitimately drawn from the use made of the first part of the verse in Malachi, is established by that quotation which immediately follows in Mark, and which is adopted by the other Evangelists in the beginning of the Gospels. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." This is the account which John gave of himself when the Jews sent to him, asking, "Who art thou? I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." The quotation is taken from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, the first eleven verses of which are an account of the nature and the manner of that salvation which the God of Israel was to bring. When you recollect the language which John uniformly employed with regard to himself, "I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him; that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come, baptizing with water;" and when you find the inspired historians agreeing with John himself in applying to him this prophecy of Isaiah, you have no doubt that Jesus is the Lord, whose way the voice was to prepare; and you are directed to apply to Jesus all the expressions employed in that passage to characterize the person before whom the voice went, *i. e.* you will find, upon reading these eleven verses of Isaiah, that you are taught by this application of one of them to consider Jesus as Jehovah, the God of Israel, who came himself, with a strong hand, to be their Saviour and their Shepherd. Accordingly the angel, in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, thus announces to Zacharias the birth of John: "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," referring, in this annunciation, to the prophecies of both Isaiah and Malachi: and our Lord, by taking to himself the name of the good shepherd, and by frequently calling his disciples his flock, his sheep, and his lambs, plainly refers to these words of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm." But as all the parts of that prophecy mark one person whom

the voice was to announce, if this expression belong to him, the rest belong also.

2. The other head, under which I proposed to arrange those expressions, which afford the most conclusive proof that Jesus is the person who was announced in the Old Testament, as Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel, is a number of quotations from a long prophecy in Isaiah, that extends from the seventh to the twelfth chapter. The kings of Syria and Israel had combined against the kingdom of Judah, and they threatened to dethrone Ahaz, the king, and to raise a stranger to rule over the house of David. The prophet is sent to comfort the king and the people, by giving them assurance of the stability of the kingdom of Judah, and of deliverance from their present enemies. The prophecy has an immediate reference to the circumstances of the kingdom. But you find, upon reading it, such a mixture as is not uncommon in the Old Testament prophecies. You meet with expressions which seem to look far beyond the events of which the prophet is speaking, names and epithets which cannot, without a striking impropriety, be applied to any person born about that time, but which are a natural description of the character and office of that illustrious descendant of David, whom former prophecies had announced, and whose everlasting dominion is introduced into this prophecy of a temporal deliverance, as the most entire security that the designs of the enemies of Judah must fail, because the counsels of heaven did not admit of any interruption in the lineal succession to that crown, which was to flourish for ever upon the head of the Messiah. This is the train of thought by which the promises of temporal and of spiritual deliverance are blended together in this message to the king of Judah. It is not easy to separate them from one another, and some of the expressions are so dark, that in order to form a just conception of their meaning, you will find it necessary to call in the assistance of some of the many authors by whom they have been illustrated. You will derive particular advantage from reading one of Bishop Hurd's Lectures, in which a part of this prophecy is elucidated with the clearness and accuracy which distinguish this master of sacred criticism. Even although you should

not follow the prophet in all the changes of subject, or assign the precise meaning of every expression, you are led by a general acquaintance with the language of the Old Testament prophecies to consider many of the names that occur in this prophecy as descriptive of the Messiah; and you find the apostles of our Lord making the application to him. Matthew, in relating the miraculous conception of our Lord, as announced by the angel to Mary, says, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." This is taken from Isaiah vii. 14, and, being applied to Jesus, we are taught that he is God with us, the Jehovah of Israel, who, according to the promise by Zechariah, was to come and dwell in the midst of them.* The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. The angel who appeared to Mary said, in the first chapter of Luke, "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus: And he shall be great, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." There is a reference here both to Isaiah vii. 14, and also to Isaiah ix. 6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it for ever." Jesus, then, being, according to this application of the prophecy, that Son of David who was to sit for ever on the throne of his Father, is also the mighty God. In another part of this prophecy, Isaiah calls this Son "a rod out of the stem of Jesse," and "a branch out of his roots, which should stand as an ensign to the people, and to which the Gentiles should seek." And the Apostle Paul, in the course of an argument to show that Jesus Christ not only fulfilled the promises made

* Zechar. ii. 10, 11.

to the fathers, but was given also that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, applies these words to him, Rom. xv. 12: "And again Esaias saith, "There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust." Allusions to other expressions of this prophecy are to be found in the writings of the apostles. But the direct quotations which have been made are sufficient to show that, in their eyes, Jesus Christ is that Saviour of Israel whom the prophet, from the beginning to the end of the spiritual part of the prophecy, announces. That Person, according to the prophet, is Jehovah the God of Israel. Therefore we have the authority of the inspired books of the New Testament for the truth of the third part of our general proposition.

It is true that he is often styled in the New Testament a man sent, given, raised up by God to be the Saviour of the world. It is said that he received power of God; that the Spirit was given him; that he came to do his Father's will. And this language may seem to be inconsistent with his being Jehovah. But you will recollect that we meet with the same inconsistency in the Old Testament. The ancient Scriptures speak of the Saviour of Israel as Jehovah sent by Jehovah, himself the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and as a Son born of a virgin. It is by this peculiar manner of designation that we distinguish him in the Old Testament from God the Father. When we find the same peculiarity in the New Testament, we are confirmed in the application which we have made; and Jesus the Saviour must be the Jehovah, who was to come and save Israel, because, like him, he is called both the messenger of God, and God.

II. The second part of the general proposition is, that Jesus is the Person who was worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, and whose glory filled the tabernacle. It might be sufficient to rest the proof of this upon the prophecy of Malachi. The same Person is there called the Lord coming to his own temple, and the messenger of the covenant. But Jesus is unquestionably the messenger of the covenant. Therefore the temple to which he came was his, and it could not without impiety be called his, unless he was worshipped there. This proof is confirmed by many ana-

logies, and by some express intimations in the New Testament.

The analogies are of this kind. Jesus is called the effulgence of the Father's glory. John says, εσκηνωσεν, he tabernacled amongst us, and εθεασαμεθα δοξαν αυτου, we contemplated his glory; a phraseology most natural in a Jew, who considered the Shechinah as the visible symbol of the divine presence, if he also believed that the Person, who had exhibited that symbol for many ages in the temple, became by his incarnation an inhabitant of earth. His body was a tabernacle which veiled the glory of his presence in such a manner as to make it safe for mortals, θεασασθαι, to look steadily, for some time upon it. There is one occasion, indeed, recorded in the Gospels, when this glory burst forth so as to overpower the beholders. Upon a mount to which Jesus led three of his disciples, "he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow, and a bright cloud overshadowed them." This is called by Peter, when relating this vision, μεγαλοπρεπης δοξα, the transcendant glory. The veil which usually concealed the majesty of the Godhead from the sight of the disciples was for a moment dropped, and their senses were astonished with an effulgence, such as filled the tabernacle at those times when it was unsafe even for the sons of Aaron to enter. This appearance, however transitory, was fitted to mark out Jesus to those who were permitted to behold it as the Lord of glory: and it is stated by the apostle as the pledge of that glory in which he is now enthroned, and in which he shall come to judge the world, 2 Peter i. 16, 17. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, when we were with him in the holy mount." The new Jerusalem is thus described by John. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them. The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 3, 23. It is said that Jesus shall come at the last day, εν πυρι φλογος: And that he shall destroy the man of sin, τη επιφανεια της παρουσιας αὐτου, with the manifestation

of his presence. 2 Thess. ii. 8. All this language of the New Testament is borrowed from the Shechinah. And it will appear most proper and significant, when you consider Jesus, whose glory enlightens heaven, whose brightness dazzled the eyes of the disciples on the mount, and whose excellence might be contemplated when it shone "full of grace and truth" through the veil of his flesh, as the Lord of the temple, whose presence had formed both the more awful and the more encouraging appearances of the Shechinah. Analogies of this kind, when they are frequent and striking, constitute a very satisfying evidence to those who are capable of tracing them. But as they may be abused, it is always desirable to have them supported by some direct proofs of which the judgment may lay hold, without the aid of imagination. The direct proofs of the point suggested by these analogies, are of two kinds. The first consists of quotations applied to Jesus from those Psalms in which the glory of the Jehovah of Israel in his temple is described. The second is the testimony of the Apostle John.

1. The Psalms were hymns composed for the service of the temple; and several of them were mentioned formerly in proof of this position, that the person worshipped in the temple was the same who had appeared to the patriarchs. But several expressions in these very Psalms are applied by the apostles to Christ. We read in Psalm lxviii, "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in. They have seen thy goings, O God, my king, in thy sanctuary." But the apostle, Eph. iv. 8, when speaking of the gift of Christ, quotes in proof of it, the 18th verse of this Psalm: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men;" and he argues that the propriety of the expression, "he ascended," arises from this, that the same person who ascended had first descended. Now one person is addressed or spoken of from the beginning to the end of the Psalm. It is impossible that at the 18th verse there can be an abrupt address to Christ, without any intimation that the person addressed is different from him mentioned in the 17th verse, and spoken of in the sequel. We have, therefore, the authority of the Apostle Paul for applying the whole of Psalm lxviii. to Jesus, so that we may say of him, as in the 29th verse,

"Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents to thee." Again the apostle to the Hebrews derived one proof that Jesus was originally superior to angels from the command given them to worship him. But this command is found in Psalm xcvii. where the majesty of the God of Israel is described in his temple. "The Lord reigneth. Clouds and darkness are round about him. A fire goeth before him. Confounded be all they that serve graven images: worship him, all ye gods, or angels. Zion heard, and was glad." The command is introduced in a manner which plainly distinguishes the person to be worshipped from idols, and marks him to be the God of Israel. He then, whom the apostle to the Hebrews calls the first begotten, is the same who in Judah "was high above all the earth." Once more, the apostle derives his proof that Christ created the world from a passage in Psalm cii. But we cannot consider these words as addressed by the Psalmist to Christ, without admitting that he is the person mentioned in the former part of the psalm. And the reasoning of the apostle is inconclusive and sophistical, unless the person of whom he is speaking in that chapter be the same of whom the Psalmist is speaking in that psalm, *i. e.* the God who was worshipped in Zion, the Saviour of Israel, who was to appear in his glory, and whose praise was to be declared in Jerusalem, when he built up Zion.

2. The argument founded upon these quotations is confirmed by the express testimony of John, xii. 41. The evangelist, speaking of the many miracles which were performed by Jesus before the Jews, but which had not the effect of leading them to believe on him, quotes a passage from the sixth chapter of Isaiah, in which the unbelief of the Jews is foretold; and then he subjoins,—"These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him." When you read that chapter of Isaiah, you will find a most awful and majestic description of the glory of the Almighty in the temple, not that cloud which encouraged the priests to draw near, but that bright refulgent glory which no man could see and live. "I saw," says Isaiah, "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple." The expression in the Septuagint is πληρης ὁ οικος της δοξης αυτου. This was shown in vision to Isaiah

before the date of the long prophecy to which I formerly referred, as if to qualify the prophet for receiving that extraordinary communication of the spiritual deliverance prepared for his people. But he felt the weakness of humanity in this manifestation of the glory of the Lord. "Woe is me," he said, "for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Now that which Isaiah saw is called by John his glory, *i. e.* according to the context, the glory of Christ. Therefore Christ is the Lord of hosts, whose glory filled the temple. In order to evade the force of this evident conclusion, those who deny the pre-existence and the divinity of Christ have adopted the paraphrase of Dr. Clarke. "The true meaning," he says, "is, when Esaias saw the glory of God the Father revealing to him the coming of Christ, he then saw the glory of him who was to come in the glory of his Father. Esaias in beholding the glory of God, and in receiving from him a revelation of the coming of Christ, saw, that is, foresaw the glory of Christ just as Abraham saw, *i. e.* foresaw his day and was glad."* You may judge of the influence which attachment to system has upon the most acute and enlightened minds, when such a man as Dr. Clarke could do such violence to two words in this short sentence of John. He considers *saw* as equivalent to *foresaw*, although neither Isaiah nor John intimate that the objects presented to the prophet's sight were a prophecy of future events; and he considers *his glory*, *i. e.* the glory of Christ, as equivalent to the glory of God revealing to him the coming of Christ at the end of the world. I should rather say that his interpretation gives a double meaning to each of the words, *ειδε την δοξαν αυτου*. He saw the glory of God, and he foresaw the glory of Christ.

III. One part of the general proposition still remains. That Christ is the person who appeared to the patriarchs, and gave the law.

We are entitled to consider this as an inference from the points already proved. For Christ having been found to be the Saviour of Israel, who was worshipped in the temple, he must, according to the induction stated in the former section, be the same who appeared to the patriarchs, and who gave the law from Mount Sinai. But we are not

* Clarke's Works, vol. iv. No. 597.

obliged to have recourse to this mode of proof. Even of this last point, seemingly the most remote from the Gospel, the New Testament contains separate evidence; for there are many expressions in the New Testament, of which this part of the proposition gives the most natural interpretation, and there are others which require the belief of it. Of the first kind are the following: When our Lord says, John viii. 59, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad;" the words will appear most significant, if Christ was the person who appeared to Abraham. When Peter says, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, "The prophets prophesied of the grace which should come, searching what the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify," he seems to say that Christ spake by the prophets; and when he says, in the same Epistle, "Christ was quickened," *i. e.* raised from the dead "in the spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing," all the other meanings which have been affixed to these obscure words appear forced and unnatural, when compared with this, that Christ is Jehovah, who said before the flood, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years," and who, during this time of forbearance, raised up Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Once more, when our Lord says, Matth. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would *I* have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" if you consider our Lord as the person who had carried the Jews in the days of old, who had sent prophets, and by a mixture of mercies and chastisements, had called them to repentance, this lamentation over Jerusalem has a consistency, a beauty, and an energy, which are very much lost, by supposing that his peculiar care of them only began with his manifestation in the flesh.

It is plain that all these passages derive much light and improvement from admitting that Jesus is the person who appeared to the patriarchs and gave the law. But there are other passages in the New Testament, the sense of which obviously requires the truth of this part of the pro-

position. The Apostle, 1 Cor. x. 4, in applying the history of the children of Israel as an example and warning to Christians, has these words: "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." The part of Jewish history to which the Apostle refers, is thus related, Psalm lxxviii. 15, 16, "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock." In grateful remembrance of this seasonable exertion of divine power, God is often called in the Old Testament the Rock of Israel; so Psalm lxxviii. 35, it is said, "They remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer." Now the Apostle says, that the spiritual rock that followed, *i. e.* went along with them in their journey, was Christ. His power brought water out of the rock, and the same power continued to defend and guide them. Again, 1 Cor. x. 9, the Apostle, continuing to draw a lesson to Christians from the history of the Israelites, says, "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed of serpents." We read, Deut. vi. 16, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." And here the Apostle substitutes Christ in place of the Lord their God. The Greek runs thus, Μηδε εκπειραζωμεν τον Χριστον, καθως και τινες αυτων επειρασαν. It has been well observed that the particles καθως και, require us to repeat after επειρασαν the same accusatives which had followed εκπειραζωμεν: and almost all the MSS. and the most ancient versions agree with the earliest writers who quote this passage in reading Χριστον as the first accusative. The 18th verse of Psalm lxviii. which I mentioned formerly as quoted by the apostle to the Ephesians, and applied to Christ, immediately follows another verse of that Psalm, in which are these words,—"The Lord is among them in the holy place, as in Sinai;" so that the same person who ascended on high was in Sinai: and accordingly the apostle to the Hebrews xii. 25, 26, has taught us that it was the voice of Christ which shook Mount Sinai. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh from heaven; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Whose voice then shook the earth,"

It is not easy for one who is acquainted with the phraseology of the New Testament, to understand any other by "him that speaketh from heaven" than Jesus Christ. But this is the immediate antecedent to the relative, which begins the next clause, "Whose voice;" and the time marked by "then" is sufficiently determined by the context to be the time of giving the law from Mount Sinai.

All these particulars laid together constitute an evidence which appears to be satisfactory, that Jesus Christ is the person who appeared to the patriarchs, and gave the law from Mount Sinai, who was worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, and who was announced by the prophets as the author of a new dispensation.

SECTION III.

THERE are some objections to the conclusiveness of the evidence now adduced, and there is a difference of opinion with regard to the amount of the proposition, supposing it to be proved. It is proper that you should be acquainted both with the objections and with the different opinions. In following out this discussion, I was led to consult a variety of authors, many of whom repeat the same things, with a small change of expression. By comparing them together, I shall be able to state the objections and the different opinions clearly: and it may be both agreeable and useful to you to know the names, and to receive a specimen of the manner of those writers who have entered most deeply into this controversy. In the quotations which follow, I shall have occasion to oppose Socinian, Arian, and Athanasian writers to one another. For the objections which the Socinians make to the evidence of the proposition are answered not only by the Athanasians, but by the Arians also; and the futility of the inference which the Arians draw from the proposition is exposed by the Socinians, as well as by the Athanasians. So that those who hold the third opinion concerning the Person of Christ, have for their allies, in one part of this discussion, those who hold the second opinion, and in another part of it, those who hold the first.

The Socinians are obliged, in consistency with their principles, to combat the whole of that proposition which we have been endeavouring to establish, because, if it be true, it leaves no doubt with regard to the pre-existence of Jesus. I will not follow them in their attempts to give another interpretation to those texts which constitute the evidence of the proposition, but will leave you to judge, from reviewing them, whether that interpretation by which the proposition is supported be not agreeable to the natural sense of the words in every particular passage, and to the analogy of all of them taken together. In stating the objections to the evidence, I have two things to lay before you:—1. The Socinian solution of that expression in the Old Testament, an Angel of Jehovah, which furnishes one of the general grounds of the proposition. 2. A plausible argument against it, drawn from a mode of expression which occurs in different places of the New Testament.

1. The Person whom we traced through the Old Testament is often called an angel, the angel of the Lord, from whence it has been inferred that he cannot be God the Father. But Mr. Lindsey, one of the latest and ablest defenders of pure Socinianism, in the Sequel to his Apology, furnishes the following solution of that expression: "In the account which is given of the divine appearances in the Scriptures, it is sometimes related in what form and manner they were notified and made, viz. by an extraordinary light, fire, cloud, audible voice, &c. At all other times it cannot be doubted but there was some sensible sign given, though it be not always mentioned. Now this outward token of the presence of God is what is meant generally by the angel of God, where not particularly specified and appropriated otherwise; that which manifested his appearance, whatever it was." He considers the Shechinah, or material symbol of glory, and the audible voice of the oracle from thence, as angels of the Lord, the true God acting upon them, and manifesting himself by them; and therefore he concludes that it was not any great angel or separate spirit who was seen and heard in the instances quoted from the Old Testament, but God himself appearing in the only way in which a spiritual being can appear, by sensible tokens and actions, exhibited for the end proposed, such as an extraordinary light, a parti-

cular shape or figure, an articulate voice, &c. &c.* The solution proceeds upon this sound principle of theism, that all the creatures of God may be employed to execute his purposes. He maketh the winds his messengers, and fire, pestilence, and sword, receiving their destination from him, may be called his angels. But this principle, however true, does not give a satisfactory explication of the subject to which it is applied. For the appearances to be accounted for are not occasional, unconnected, and varying. We have found one angel of God standing forth through all the Scriptures, bearing a certain character, and employed in offices and actions which are described with every circumstance of time and place that can serve to mark a person, and often with a reference to former offices and actions of the same person. I shall give you this answer to the Socinian solution, in the words of Mr. Taylor, an English clergyman, who published, some years ago, a book entitled, the Apology of Ben Mordecai to his friends for embracing Christianity. Under the assumed appearance of a Jew, stating the reasons which made him think the Christian faith not inconsistent with the law of Moses, Mr. Taylor artfully introduces, and defends with learning and ingenuity, his own views of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. He considers Jesus as the first of the creatures of God, an angel distinguished above every other, who conducted the dispensation of the Old Testament, and who completed the scheme for the redemption of the human race, by assuming a body at the time when the Gospel was preached. This part of his creed leads him to defend the pre-existence of Jesus against the attacks of the Socinians; and in answer to their hypothesis, that all the appearances which we have ascribed to one person are nothing more than the appearance of the invisible Jehovah by symbol, he thus reasons: "The accounts of many of these appearances are given in so plain and historical a manner, and with so many circumstances, which cannot be accounted for either by vision or figurative expression, that both the Jews and Christians of former ages have looked upon them to be literal; and if they are not historical facts, there is no

* Sequel to Lindsey's Apol. p. 324, 336.

dependence upon the literal sense of any one action recorded in Scripture." "A plague or an earthquake may be called a messenger of Jehovah, though it be no person. But it is never called Jehovah: and it is impossible to conceive how an angel called Jehovah, who was visible to several people at the same time, and conversed with them personally, can be considered merely as a symbol, or as any other than a real person."*

2. The second objection against the proposition, which we have been illustrating, is a plausible argument drawn from a mode of expression that occurs in different places of the New Testament. It is said in the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." And there are many other expressions to the same purport, which seem to imply that God had not spoken by his Son till the last days; and undoubtedly, if we knew nothing more of the divine dispensations than these words contain, this is the interpretation we should give them. But every author is to be explained in a manner which renders his meaning in one place consistent with his meaning in another; and every author, supposing that his readers will observe this rule, is not accustomed to say in one place every thing that may be said upon a subject, but leaves much to be supplied from other places. When we take into view what we may learn from the rest of Scripture concerning the character and offices of the Son, it is easy to interpret the words of the apostle in this manner. God spake formerly by the prophets, the messengers of his will to the fathers. The Son did not appear. It was not known to the world or to the prophets that they were inspired by the ministry of the Son; and no inconvenience arose from this circumstance not being made known, because the message was equally divine, and claimed the same reverence, whether the prophets received it from God, or from the Son of God. But now the Son hath been made manifest. A person assuming that name, and conversing freely with men, hath declared God, not in vision to prophets, but openly to the people. Now, therefore, it is fit to reveal the original dignity of

* Ben Mordecai; p. 228, 256.

this Person, in order that respect for the messenger may procure attention and obedience to the message. The earliest Christian writers furnish the answer which I have now given. "The Lord was truly the instructor of the ancient people, first by Moses, afterwards by the prophets. But he is the guide of the new people, by himself face to face."* And the answer has been adopted by those who hold the second and third opinions concerning the Person of Christ, as sufficient to repel this part of the Socinian objection. "The plain sense of the word," says Mr. Taylor, "appears to me to be this: God spake formerly to our fathers by the mediation or ministry of the prophets, but now speaks to us by the Son himself, without any such mediation."† But there is another part of this objection arising from those expressions in the New Testament where the law seems to be ascribed to angels. "Our fathers," says Stephen, Acts vii. 53, "received the law by the disposition of angels." And the apostle to the Hebrews argues upon this ground, that the Gospel is superior to the law. "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord?" It is impossible, then, say the Socinians to other Christians, that the Son, whom you account a being superior to angels, was the Author of the law, for the excellence of the Gospel is made to consist in this, that it was given by him. The answer to this objection is, in part, the same as to the former.

It is implied in some passages of the Old Testament, that the giver of the law was attended upon Mount Sinai by a multitude of the heavenly host.—"The Lord," says Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 2, "came from Sinai: He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of his saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them." The Son of God was not then revealed. His superiority to the retinue of his angels was not known; and no particular mention being made of him, it is said accurately by Stephen that the fathers received the law εἰς διά-

* Clem. Alex. Pædag. L. I. c. 8, 11.
† Ben Mordecai, p. 317.

ταγας αγγελων, inter turmas angelorum. Whereas the Gospel was spoken by the Lord himself, without that attendance of the heavenly host which constituted part of the awful scene upon Mount Sinai, but with a manifestation of his own original glory. In this respect the manner of giving the law is clearly distinguished from the manner of giving the Gospel, without our being obliged to infer from the expressions used that an angel was the author of the law. But in order to perceive the full force of the answer to this objection, you must recollect that the ten commandments are not included under "the word spoken by angels;" for the history of Moses requires us to make a distinction between the decalogue and the rest of the law. The ten commandments were spoken by God himself. "God spake these words, saying, I am Jehovah." But the majesty with which they were delivered was so terrible, that the people entreated God would not speak to them any more. "Speak thou with us," they said to Moses, "and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die." Accordingly Moses says, Deut. v. 22, "These words," the decalogue, "the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, with a great voice, and he added no more." "The rest," says Dr. Randolph, both the judicial and the ceremonial law, was delivered, and the covenant was made, by the mediation of Moses: and therefore the apostle says, Gal. iii. 19, 'The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator:' hence it is called the law of Moses. And the character given of it in the Pentateuch is this—these are the statutes, and judgments, and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moses. In like manner, after the tabernacle was reared, God communed with Moses from between the cherubims on the mercy-seat, who represented angels, and with the priests who entered the tabernacle. But the people were not permitted to approach."* So far Dr. Randolph, formerly Professor of Divinity in Oxford, whose writings, one entitled a Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, and another, Prælectiones Theologicæ, chiefly upon the divinity of our Saviour, I have found very useful, com-

* Præl. Theolog. vol. iii. p. 397.

posed with sound judgment, and with much knowledge of the Scriptures. You will attend to the force of the distinction which he has mentioned. The ten commandments, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, and which are incorporated as part of the Gospel, so that the moral law is established by faith, were spoken by God himself. But the judicial and ceremonial law, which were local temporary institutions, not extending beyond the boundaries and the duration of the Jewish state, were ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator. The divine Author of them was withdrawn from the eyes of the people, for Moses stood between him and them; but there was no intervention of this kind in the delivery of the Gospel. Instead of that terrible majesty which had accompanied the giving of the ten commandments, which made the people request that God would not speak any more, there was in the appearance of Jesus a grace which invited men to draw near; and he himself spoke the words of eternal life.

Considering, then, the Socinian objections as not sufficient to invalidate the evidence that has been adduced, I shall now direct your attention to the different opinions that have been held concerning the amount of the general proposition. If Jesus appeared to the patriarchs, gave the law, and was worshipped in the temple, it is plain that he existed before he was born of Mary. But it is not self-evident whether he be an exalted creature, or essentially God. And many of those who consider him as the first of the creatures of God, while they defend his pre-existence against the Socinians, endeavour to reconcile this proposition with their own system. You will judge of the nature of the attempt from two books in which it is formally made. The one is entitled, Essay on Spirit, by Dr. Clayton, formerly Bishop of Clogher in Ireland. The principles of his book are these. The whole expanse is full of spirits of different ranks and degrees. God may communicate what proportions of his attributes he pleases to the different gradations of created beings; and, according to an ancient opinion, he may employ those upon whom he has conferred more exalted powers, to act in a middle station between him and the lower productions of his Almighty hand. Now, while inferior angels were ap-

pointed to preside over other people and nations upon earth, one angel, who is called by Moses Jehovah, had Israel assigned to him by the Most High as the portion of his inheritance. He was the guardian angel of the posterity of Abraham; and the peculiar distinction conferred upon him was this, that he was authorised to appear in the name and person of Jehovah, as his image and representative. Hence, although in some places he is distinguished from the Almighty who sent him, yet, in others, he takes the name of Jehovah, and claims and receives the honours due to God.

The other book is the apology of Ben Mordecai, one great object of which is to elucidate and support the opinion that had been delivered in the Essay on Spirit. Mr. Taylor lays down this principle, that as it is said in the Jewish Scriptures that Jehovah often appeared and conversed with men; and as the supreme God and Father never was seen by any one, there must be some other person besides him who is called by that name. He illustrates the truth of this principle by most of the passages in the Old Testament, to which I have referred in Section First; and then he concludes from them:—"Thus we see that the sacred writers attribute to the angel who acts in the name, and authority, and moral character of God, the name Jehovah. And this angel, speaking in the name of God that sent him, uses the first person; and whatever is performed by this angel is said to be performed by God himself. So the angel who appeared to Moses in the bush, said, 'I am that I am. Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.' All this is agreeable to the received customs of mankind, and well understood. The angel takes the name of Jehovah, because it is a common maxim, *loquitur legatus sermone mittentis eum*, as an ambassador in the name of his king, or the fecialis when he denounced war in the name of the Roman people: and what is done by the angel, is said to be done by God, according to another maxim. *Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*"*

From these two writers you may learn the Arian opinion with regard to the amount of the proposition which

* Ben Mordecai, p. 245, &c. 283.

we have been considering. That person, they say, whom the Scriptures of the Old Testament call both angel and Jehovah, is a created spirit, who was allowed to personate the Almighty, not only speaking by his authority, but appearing in his person, and bearing his name, who having, in the name of Jehovah, conversed with the patriarchs, and given the law, came in the last days in his own person to preach the Gospel.

To this opinion I shall oppose the words of Mr. Lindsey and of Dr. Randolph.

It is an opinion which the Socinians cannot admit, because it establishes the pre-existence of Jesus: and as this opinion appears to remove some of the difficulties which attend the third opinion concerning the person of Christ, and has been adopted by many as a middle system between that which degrades the Saviour of the world to the rank of a man, and that which exalts him to be equal with God the Father, the Socinians consider it as peculiarly formidable to their tenets, and they attack it with much vigour, and often with sound argument. Mr. Lindsey, after quoting the manner in which the Lord passed by and proclaimed his name before Moses, says, "If this be not a description and peculiar character of God, where shall we meet with it? An angel ever so great, ever so ancient, is still a creature; and can never be clothed, nor ought to be clothed with these divine attributes upon any occasion." The whole transaction at Mount Sinai shows that Jehovah was present, and acted, and not another for him. It is the God that had delivered them out of Egypt, with whom they were to enter into covenant, as their God, and who thereupon accepted them as his people, who was the author of their religion and laws, and who himself delivered to them those ten commands, the most sacred part. There is nothing to lead us to imagine that the person who was their God, did not speak in his own name; not the least intimation that here was another representing him."*

The author of the Essay on Spirit is aware of the force of these objections to his system. "The only difficulty in this case," he says, "is that the Jehovah of Zion does not

* Lindsey, p. 313—339.

always declare that he is deputed, but actually and literally speaks in his own name, calls himself Jehovah, and positively prohibits the worship of any God but himself. Thou shalt have none other Gods before me; thereby seeming to forbid even the worship of the Supreme Jehovah." His answer to this difficulty is, that the Hebrews were far from being explicit and accurate in their style; and that it was customary for prophets and angels to speak in the name and character of God.*

You will judge how far this answer removes the difficulty, from the following extract out of the writings of Dr. Randolph, who, in his vindication of the doctrines of the Trinity, has given a formal answer to the Essay on Spirit; and in other parts of his works also employs much pains to establish this point, that the angel who is called Jehovah in the Old Testament is not a creature, but truly God. "Some, to evade these strong proofs of our Lord's divinity, have asserted that this was only a created angel, appearing in the name or person of the Father; it being customary in Scripture for one person to sustain the character, and act and speak in the name of another. But these assertions want proof. I find no instances of one person acting and speaking in the name of another, without first declaring in whose name he acts and speaks. The instances usually alleged are nothing to the purpose. If we sometimes find an angel in the book of Revelation speaking in the name of God, yet from the context it will be easy to show that this angel was the great angel, the angel of the covenant. But if there should be some instances in the prophetical or poetical parts of Scripture, of an abrupt change of persons, where the person speaking is not particularly specified, this will by no means come up to the case before us. Here is a person sustaining the name and character of the most High God from one end of the Bible to the other; bearing his glorious and fearful name, the incommunicable name Jehovah, expressive of his necessary existence; sitting in the throne of God; dwelling and presiding in his temple; delivering laws in his own name; giving out oracles; hearing prayers; forgiving sins. And yet these writers would persuade us

* Essay on Spirit, p. 65.

that this was only a tutelary angel; that a creature was the God of Israel, and that to this creature all their service and worship was directed; that the great God, 'whose name is jealous,' was pleased to give his glory, his worship, his throne, to a creature. What is this but to make the law of God himself introductory of the same idolatry that was practised by all the nations of the heathen? But we are told that bold figures of speech are common in the Hebrew language, which is not to be tied down in its interpretation to the severer rules of modern criticism. We may be assured that those opinions are indefensible, which cannot be supported without charging the word of God with want of propriety or perspicuity. Such pretences might be borne with, if the question were about a phrase or two in the poetical or prophetical parts of Scripture. But this, if it be a figure, is a figure which runs through the whole Scripture. And a bold interpreter must he be, who supposes that such figures are perpetually and uniformly made use of in a point of such importance, without any meaning at all. This is to confound the use of language, to make the Holy Scripture a mysterious unintelligible book, sufficient to prove nothing, or rather to prove any thing, which a wild imagination shall suggest."*

I have not been willing to interrupt the impression which this whole passage is fitted to make. The three great circumstances contained in it, and which constitute the whole argument upon this subject, are these. 1. The uniformity with which the angel appears in the person of Jehovah. It is not upon a few particular occasions, when an abrupt change of persons might be dictated by strong emotions, or interpreted by interesting situations. But throughout the whole Bible, at the delivery of laws, in plain historical narration, as well as in impassioned poetry, the angel, without any intimation of a figure, speaks as God. But, as has been well said, even an ambassador, when he declares the commands of his prince, speaks in the third person,—The King my master. The prophets commonly introduced their revelations with this exordium, Thus saith the Lord, before they presumed to speak in his name. Angels, when they appeared in vision, de-

* Randolph's View. vol. ii. p. 129.

clared that they were sent by the God of heaven; and there appears the grossest impiety in supposing that a creature during a succession of ages, *histroniam exercuisse in quâ Dei nomen assumat, et omnia, quæ Dei sunt, sibi attribuat.** 2. The second circumstance is, that this angel not only takes the other names by which the Almighty is known, but calls himself Jehovah, although that word, both by its natural import, and by the manner in which the Scriptures introduce it, appears to be the proper distinguishing name of the Supreme God. Εγω ειμι ὁ ων, is the exposition which the Septuagint gives of this name. Now το ον was the name given by Plato to the Supreme Being. 'Ει, Thou art, was the single word written upon the entrance of the temple at Delphos; and Plutarch says that this name is solely applicable to God, since that which truly is must be sempiternal. The Scripture use of the name Jehovah corresponds to the import of this exposition. "Thou whose name alone is Jehovah." "Jehovah is my name, and my glory will I not give to another."† Yet this word the angel takes to himself; and when Moses asked him, if "they shall say unto me, what is his name? What shall I say unto them?" this is the name which he desires Moses to carry to the children of Israel as his.‡ 3. The third circumstance is, that the angel not only demands worship, but claims it as his to the exclusion of every other being. The professed object of the law of Moses was to preserve the Jews from the idolatry of the surrounding nations. But if the author of their law was only a creature of a higher rank than the angels who presided over other kingdoms, and if the continued use of a figure of speech, which was never properly explained, led them to consider this creature as God, then did the Almighty lend his name to establish in the land of Israel the worship of a creature; and all the preparation and splendour of the law were insignificant, since it only taught the Jews to worship one creature, while their neighbours were worshipping another.

These reasons appear to show, that without supposing an inextricable delusion to run through all the Scriptures,

* Bull, p. 10. † Ps. lxxxiii. 18. Isaiah xlii. 8.
‡ Exd. iii. 13—15.

we must admit that the person whom we have traced in the Old and New Testament is not a creature, but that the name which he uniformly takes to himself, belongs to him by nature.

It may perhaps occur to you, that by ascribing that intercourse with mankind which is recorded in the Old Testament to a person who is himself truly God, we remove God the Father from all care of the children of men, and detract from the honour due to him. But we may find, as we advance in this subject, that the Scriptures have obviated this difficulty, by intimating that perfect union between the Father and the Son, which was just mentioned in summing up the argument from creation. Although God made the worlds by his Son, yet he is also the Creator of all, because the Father and the Son are one; and although God from the beginning manifested himself by his Son, "who is the image of the invisible God," yet the glory of the Father and the Son are the same. It was the power of the undivided Godhead which was exerted by the Son at creation; it was the majesty of the undivided Godhead which appeared in the Son upon mount Sinai; and all the adorations offered through ages to the giver of the law were the tribute which the one true God is alone worthy to receive. We may find that this system is revealed in Scripture; and that it reconciles all the discoveries made concerning the person of the Son of God. At present we are employed in collecting the facts upon which this system rests; and without pretending to speculate as to the probability of any particular fact, we receive the information which the Scripture affords.

One great advantage we derive from the proposition which has lately engaged our attention. It connects in the closest manner the Old and the New Testament. They not only point to one great object, but they were conducted by one person, who, as Justin Martyr speaks, although he did at length for good reasons take to himself a body, yet had always been doing good to the human race; for no excellent thing was ever performed by men without the presence of this Divine Person. You may expect then to find in the Old and New Testament that unity of design, and that correspondence and analogy of parts, which mark all the schemes of a superior enlightened mind. According

to this proposition, the glorious person, who had established the dispensation of the Old Testament, is not made to withdraw as soon as it comes to an end. But he appears in the New Testament under another character, with a display of more condescending and more universal love, to complete the work which he had begun, and to fulfil the words of his prophets. Every thing said by them concerning the person who had sent them is applied by this proposition to the person whom they announced; and there is a depth and perfection of wisdom in the manner of the application. As it was not necessary that the Son of God should be known while the Old Testament dispensation existed, we find that the ancient Jews had very imperfect conceptions of his nature. But when he came in the flesh, he took off the veil from the ancient Scriptures. The Old Testament now appears to be full of Jesus Christ; and all the revelations, from the beginning of the world, collected and interpreted by their application to him, redound to the honour, and illustrate the original dignity of the angel of the covenant.

CHAP. VI.

DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST TAUGHT DURING HIS LIFE.

I HAVE considered both those passages of Scripture, which teach plainly that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, and those which ascribe certain actions to him in his pre-existent state. The manner in which these actions are described not only contains a clear refutation of the first opinion concerning the person of Christ, but seems intended to convey an impression that he is not a creature; and with the prejudice arising from this impression, we now proceed to attend to those passages of Scripture which are to direct us in forming a conception of his original dignity.

Dr. Clarke, in his Introduction to the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, expresses himself thus: "'Tis a thing very destructive of religion, and the cause of almost all divisions amongst Christians, when young persons, at their first entering upon the study of divinity, look upon human and perhaps modern forms of speaking, as the rule of their faith; understanding those also according to the accidental sound of the words, or according to the notions which happen at any particular time to prevail in the world, and then picking out, as proofs, some few single texts of Scripture, which, to minds already strongly prejudiced, must needs seem to sound, or may easily be accommodated, the same way; while they attend not impartially to the whole scope and general tenor of Scripture. Whereas on the contrary were the whole Scriptures first thoroughly studied, and seriously considered, as the rule and only rule of truth in matters of religion; and the sense of all hu-

man forms and expressions deduced from thence, the greatest part of errors, at least of uncharitable divisions, might in all probability have been prevented."

Dr. Clarke speaks the language of all true Protestants, when he says that the Scriptures, thoroughly studied and seriously considered, are the rule, and the only rule of truth in matters of religion. He speaks like a sound critic, when he says that texts ought not to be understood according to the accidental sound of the words, or according to the notions which happen at any particular time to prevail. But it does not appear to me how we can attain a certain knowledge of the whole scope and general tenor of Scripture, without a close examination of particular texts. In every inquiry we find it necessary to guard against the errors which arise from partial views, by comparing different parts of the subject, and by correcting the conclusions which had been too hastily formed. But still, notwithstanding this danger, the scientific method of arriving at truth in all subjects is to proceed by an induction of particulars to an apprehension of the whole: and in the study of theology, which is in truth the study of the Scriptures, any notions formed of the doctrine contained in them must be loose and precarious, unless you investigate by sound criticism the amount of words and phrases. Although therefore I consider the collection of texts from the New Testament relative to the doctrine of the Trinity, which Dr. Clarke has made the ground-work of his propositions, as a most useful help to any one who sets himself to examine the subject, I do think that by following the method of studying it which he recommends, there is a danger of being prevented, by a phraseology which runs through many of the texts, from receiving the obvious sense of others. If, because it is said in numberless places that the Son is sent by the Father, and came to do the will of the Father, and that all things are given him by God, we infer that there is an inferiority to God in his nature, and afterwards find this inference in direct opposition to those texts, which teach that there is an equality, we have reason to presume that we have committed a mistake; and we are reminded, that the proper method of proceeding was not to draw a conclusion from a general impression, but to begin with ascertaining the sense of

particular texts, and to rest in that conclusion which affords a consistent interpretation of all the passages that relate to the same subject.

I said, indeed, that we bring with us, to the part of the subject upon which we are now entering, an impression that Jesus is not a creature. But this is an impression suggested by a careful and patient examination of those texts in which he is described as the Creator of the world, and by the whole tenor of those parts of the Old and New Testament, in which he is described as the Person by whom all intercourse between the Deity and the human race has been conducted. It is impossible to make progress in any subject without forming some opinion as we advance. If that opinion receive no support in the further prosecution of the subject, it rests upon its original foundation. If it be contradicted, we ought to revise the grounds of it, that we may discover where the mistake lies: but if it be found to coincide with the amount of future researches, it receives light and confirmation from this concurrence of evidence.

These are the principles upon which I am to proceed in a critical examination of those texts of the New Testament, the true meaning of which must decide the question between the second and third opinions concerning the person of Christ. But as the texts are found chiefly in the Epistles, which were not written for twenty years after our Lord's death, I think it proper to begin with an historical view of the manner in which the doctrine concerning his person was taught during his life.

It is manifest to any one who reads the Gospels, that our Lord did not unfold all the truths of his religion at once to his disciples. In condescension to the narrowness of their views, and the strength of their prejudices, there was a preparation by which he led them on, as they were able to bear it, to points of difficult apprehension. When we observe that he never spoke plainly of his sufferings, till they had declared their faith in him as the Messiah—that the future extension of his religion was intimated to them in parables—that they were not permitted before his death, to preach the gospel to any but Jews—and that their expectations of a temporal kingdom continued till his ascension, we cannot doubt that some of the funda-

mental doctrines of Christianity were very imperfectly known by the apostles while our Lord was with them; and we are not surprised to find these words in his last discourse to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."* If he was truly God, there was a peculiar fitness in the reserve with which he chose to reveal the dignity of his person. He appeared as a man, that he might converse familiarly with his brethren—that, by leading a life of sorrow, he might go before his companions in the practice of those virtues which they also were to be required to exercise—and that, by falling in due time a victim to the malice of his enemies, he might accomplish the salvation of the world. For these purposes, the veil of humanity was assumed; and if it was indeed the Godhead which that veil concealed from the eyes of ordinary beholders, the same purposes required that those persons, who were continually around the person of Jesus, should have, during his life, only an indistinct impression of the glory and majesty of him with whom they conversed—and that the clear knowledge that he was God, should be conveyed to their minds after his death, by that recollection and explication of his words, which they were to derive from the illumination of his Spirit. After he had ascended to heaven, they could not think too highly of his character; and their conceptions of the wisdom and grace of their Master would be very much raised, when they found that those words, the full force of which they understood not at the time when they were spoken, admitted of an interpretation every way suited to the exalted notions, which they were taught by the Spirit to entertain concerning the dignity of him from whom they had proceeded.

This appears to be the plan which the wisdom of God followed in revealing this subject. We find, during the life of Jesus, intimations of the superiority of his character, such as are not only perfectly consistent with the future revelation that he is God, but such as nothing less than that revelation can fully explain. At the same time, we find both the apostles and Jews rather confounded than enlightened by these intimations; and it is not in the con-

* John xvi. 12.

versations recorded in the Gospels, but in the expressions used by the authors of them, or by the other apostles, after the day of Pentecost, that we discern their knowledge of the character of their Master. By giving a short connected view of these previous intimations, I shall follow the preparation which our Lord used in showing himself to his disciples.

All the circumstances which attended the birth of Jesus marked him out as an extraordinary person. The annunciation by the angel of the Lord, first to Mary, and afterwards to Joseph—the reference to ancient prophecy in the language which the angel used—the glory which shone around the shepherds of Bethlehem at the time of the birth—and the song of the multitude of the heavenly host which was with the angel that spake—together with the visit of the wise men, who, led by a star in the East, "came to Jerusalem to worship him that was born King of the Jews,"—all these things could not fail to be noised abroad; they were matter of wonder to those that heard them, and Mary, not understanding what they meant, "kept all these things," we are told, "and pondered them in her heart." The first direct explication of them was at the baptism of Jesus. John, whose mother Elizabeth was a relation of Mary, had been born a few months before Jesus. The Angel, who appeared to his father Zacharias the priest, had said that the son who was to be born "should go before the Lord God of Israel in the spirit and power of Elias;" and Zacharias, instructed by the temporary dumbness, which had been the punishment of his unbelief, to repose entire confidence in the words of the angel, said, after John was born, "Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."* When John was about thirty, "the word of God came unto him," and he appeared, according to the destination of ancient prophecy applied to him at his birth, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."† Although personally acquainted with Jesus, John knew not that he was the Messiah, till taught by these words, in what manner he was to be distinguished

* Luke, cl. i. † Luke iii. 3—6.

from others: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."* Soon after this revelation was made to John, Jesus came with the multitude to be baptized of John, who preached the baptism of repentance; and as he went up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended, either in the shape of a dove, or in the manner in which a dove descends, and lighted upon him. "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Instantly John recognised Jesus as the Person to whom he was sent to bear witness. Having seen, he "bare record, that this is the Son of God," and pointed out Jesus as such to the Jews.†

It appears impossible to me that any person, who, to all the circumstances that had conspired to raise the highest expectations concerning Jesus, joins the solemnity and splendour of that appearance by which he is made known to John, his forerunner, can interpret the words uttered by the voice from heaven in an inferior metaphorical sense, or can give them any other than that exalted import which they naturally bear, and which is suggested by the use of them in ancient prophecy. This opinion founded upon the circumstances of the case is confirmed by two critical remarks which deserve attention. The one is, that, by all the three Evangelists who record them, the article is prefixed both to the substantive and the adjective, Matt. iii. 17, *ούτος εστιν ὁ υἱος μου ὁ ἀγαπητος*; the most discriminating mode of expression that could be employed, as if to separate Jesus from every other who at any time had received the appellation of the Son of God, and to lead back the thoughts of the hearers to the prophecies in which the Messiah had been announced under that name. This is that Son of mine who is the beloved. The other critical remark is, that all the three Evangelists use the verb of the second clause, in whom I am well pleased, in the first aorist, *εν ᾧ εὐδοκησα*. Now, although we often render the Greek aorist by the English present, yet this can be done with propriety only when the proposition is equally true whether it be stated in the present, in the past, or in the

* John i. 33. † Matt. iii. 16, 17. John i. 34.

future time. Τας μεν των φαυλων συνηθειας ολιγος χρονος διελυσεν. It matters nothing to the truth or significancy of this proposition, in what time you translate διελυσε; for a short space of time has dissolved the connexions of the wicked in past ages, does dissolve them in our days, and will dissolve them in the days of our posterity. This force of the Greek indefinite tense is preserved in English by introducing the adverb always. A short space of time always dissolves the connexions of the wicked.* And thus the analogy of the Greek language requires us not only to consider the name, Son of God, as applied in a peculiar sense to Jesus, but also to refer to the expression used at his baptism that intercourse which had subsisted between the Father and the Son, before this name was announced to men.

This voice from heaven, which John heard, appeared to have conveyed to his mind the most exalted apprehensions of that Person whom it marked out to him. For the words in which he afterwards speaks of Jesus correspond to the third opinion concerning his person, rather than to the second. "He that cometh from above is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."† We cannot say that the full meaning of the expression was known to the apostles, and that they could not consider a man, to whom such a name had been given in such a manner, as merely a man whom God had sent. And yet, when we find them introducing at different times into declarations of their faith, this expression, Thou art the Son of the living God, it is natural to suppose that they referred to the voice heard at his baptism. There is one place in John's Gospel, where our Lord appears to found an argument for his divine mission upon this voice. John v. 37, 38. He had spoken of the Witness which he received from John, and of the works that he did, which bare witness that the Father had sent him: and he adds, according to our translation, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And

* Dalzel's Coll. Græca Majora, Notæ in Herod. 19, 6. Ed. 1808
† John iii. 31, 32, 35.

ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not." A different translation of these verses, which had been suggested by others, and which always appeared to me probable, is adopted and ably defended by Dr. Campbell. His translation is, "Nay, the Father who sent me, hath himself attested me. Did ye never hear his voice, or see his form? Or have ye forgotten his declaration, that ye believe not him whom he hath commissioned?" The reader will observe, says Dr. Campbell, in a note, that the two clauses, which are rendered in the English Bible as declarations, are in this version translated as questions. The difference in the original is only in the pointing. That they ought to be so read, we need not, in my opinion, stronger evidence, than that they throw much light upon the whole passage, which read in the common way is both dark and ill-connected.—Our Lord here refers them to the testimony given of him at his baptism; and, when you read the two clauses as questions, all the chief circumstances attending that memorable testimony are exactly pointed out. Have ye never heard his voice, φωνη εκ των ουρανων, nor seen his form—the σωματικον ειδος, in which Luke says the Holy Ghost descended? And have ye not his declaration abiding in you, τον λογον, the words which were spoken at that time?

There appears to me very strong internal evidence for the correction proposed by Dr. Campbell, according to which our Lord here refers to the λογος, the words uttered at his baptism, as his warrant for calling himself the Son of God. There is no doubt that he takes that name to himself in an eminent sense, both in his discourses with his disciples, with Nicodemus, a master in Israel, with the people of the Jews, and at his trial, when, being asked by the High Priest, "Art thou the Son of God?" he acknowledged that he was: a confession which, according to the sense affixed to the question by those who put it, was direct blasphemy. "What need we any further witnesses," said the High Priest: "ye have heard the blasphemy." It is very remarkable, that although our Lord seems to delight in calling the Almighty, when he is speaking of him to the disciples, your Father, your heavenly Father, a gracious name most suitable to the discoveries of his religion;

and although, in the prayer which he taught them to use, the address is, "Our Father which art in heaven," yet he never uses the expression our Father in such a manner as to include himself with them. All his discourse implies that God is his Father, in a sense different from that in which he is the Father of all mankind; and the form of his expression in one place seems chosen to mark the distinction, John xx. 17, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Indeed the strongest proofs of the divinity of Jesus, that are found in his own words, arise from the manner in which he speaks of the connexion between his Father and him. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."* Here the Father and the Son are held forth as alike incomprehensible to mortals. "What things soever the Father doeth, these doeth the Son likewise."† Here is an exact likeness in their works. Εγω και ὁ πατηρ ἐν εσμεν, "I and the Father are one."‡ The argument arising from the two last passages becomes much stronger than it appears at the first hearing them, when you attend to the circumstances in which the declarations were made. In the fifth chapter of John, our Lord, being accused of breaking the Sabbath, because upon that day he made a man whole, makes this apology, v. 17: Ὁ πατηρ μου ἑως αρτι ἐργαζεται, καγω ἐργαζομαι, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," *i. e.* My Father, who rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, never rests from the work of preserving and blessing his creatures; and I, after his example, do works of mercy on the Sabbath day. The Jews were offended with this saying, because they conceived it to imply that Jesus called God πατερα ἰδιον, which means much more than our translation has expressed, "said that God was his Father." Ἰδιον πατερα means his Father, in a sense appropriated to him. Ἰδιος is opposed to κοινος. And I call him ἰδιος πατηρ, who is not the Father of others as well as of me, but who is the Father of me only. From his calling God peculiarly his Father, they inferred that he made himself equal with

* Matth. xi. 27. † John v. 19. ‡ John x. 30.

God; and therefore they sought to kill him. Attempts have been made to give a different interpretation to the 18th verse. But they appear to me so forced that I will not recite them. What the verse conveys to every plain reader is this, that the Jews, although they looked up to God as the father of their nation, considered it as blasphemy in any individual to call God in a peculiar manner his Father, because this was putting in a claim to that title, the Son of God, which seems to imply a sameness or equality of nature with the Supreme Being, and which they were taught by their Scriptures to regard with the highest reverence. But our Lord, instead of giving such an explication of his words as might exculpate him from this charge of blasphemy, subjoins in his answer other expressions which appear to be a direct assertion of that equality with God, which the Jews conceived to be implied in his calling God peculiarly his Father. He says, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise," assuming the omnipotence of God. He says, "The Father showeth the Son all things that himself doeth," making his knowledge commensurate with the works of God. He says, "The Son quickeneth whom he will. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." It is acknowledged in all these expressions, that whatsoever the Son has is communicated to him by the Father; and this is implied in the very name the Son of God. But if this communication be not of so peculiar a kind as to imply an equality with God, a sameness of nature and perfections, there is not only an unwarrantable presumption in the words of our Lord, but in the circumstances in which they were uttered there is an equivocation inconsistent with the sincerity of an honest man.

This argument is confirmed by attending to a similar passage in the 10th chapter of John. Our Lord, speaking of that assurance of eternal life which his religion conveys to his disciples, says, x. 29, 30, "They shall never perish. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him." And they assign, as the reason for so doing, the very same which John had mentioned in the fifth

chapter: "We stone thee for blasphemy, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Our Lord's answer is, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, *i. e.* if the language of Scripture be unexceptionable, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" These words are quoted, in support of their opinion, by those who hold that our Saviour is called the Son of God purely upon account of the commission which he received. But the force of the argument, and the consistency of the discourse, require us to affix a much higher meaning to that expression. Our Lord is reasoning *a fortiori*. He vindicates himself from the charge of blasphemy in calling himself the Son of God, because even those who hold civil offices upon earth are called in Scripture gods. But that he might not appear to put himself upon a level with them, and to retract his former assertion, "I and the Father are one," he not only calls himself "him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," which implies that he had a being, and that God was his Father before he was sent; but he subjoins, "If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him;" expressions which appear to be equivalent to his former assertion, "I and the Father are one," and which were certainly understood by the Jews in that sense; for, as soon as he had uttered them, "they sought again to take him." The full argument of our Lord is, that the union between the Father and him gives him a much better title to the name of the Son of God than any office can give men to the name gods: and thus at the very time that he shelters himself from the charge of blasphemy under this Scripture expression, he intimates repeatedly, in the hearing of those who accused him of blasphemy for what he said, the superior dignity of his person.

As our Lord, in this emphatical manner, took to himself the name of the Son of God, so there is a remarkable passage in which he guards those with whom he conversed against supposing that his being called the Son of David

implied a sameness of nature, or an equality in point of dignity with his earthly progenitor. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word."* It is known to those who have read Psalm cx. in the original, that although the Septuagint version be εἶπεν ὁ Κυριος τῳ Κυριῳ μου, and our English translation be, "The Lord said unto my Lord;" yet the word in the nominative is different from that which is in the dative. The nominative is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God expressing his necessary existence. The dative is Adonai, a word expressing dominion or sovereignty. It admits, therefore, of being construed with a possessive pronoun, my Lord; and it may denote different kinds and degrees of dominion. The difficulty, then, is not what our translation might suggest, that the same name Lord is applied to the Messiah as to the Supreme Being. But it lies here. David, a Sovereign Prince, who had no earthly superior, who was taught by the promise of God to consider the Messiah as his descendant, yet, many ages before the Messiah was born, calls him "my Lord;" an expression which is a direct acknowledgment of his inferiority to his own descendant, and which implies that the Messiah existed in a superior nature before he descended from him. Our Lord draws the attention of the Pharisees to this difficulty in their own Scriptures, which they seem to have overlooked, and which they were unable to solve. He could not solve it without unfolding to them what he chose at present only obscurely to intimate. But he leaves it with them as a proof drawn from an authority which they did not question, that, if they considered the Messiah as of no higher extraction than a son of David, they were mistaken.

The whole conduct of our Lord tended to confirm the impression arising from this manner in which he spake of himself. Amidst all the simplicity, the humility, and con-

* Matth. xxii. 41—46.

descension of his life, there was an unaffected dignity uniformly supported in his words and actions, which mark him, to an unprejudiced observer, as more than man. He discovered, upon many occasions, that knowledge of the secret workings of the heart, and that acquaintance with transactions the most retired from the eyes of men, which constitute a large part of the divine omniscience. And you cannot suppose, that repeated displays of this omniscience would be overlooked by those who were continually with him, when you observe the effect which one instance produced; John i. 47, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith, whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered, before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee;" referring probably to some act of secret devotion, or of private beneficence. Nathanael finding that this stranger knew a transaction which no eye had seen, and no ear had heard from him, immediately exclaims, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." In our Lord's miracles there was an ease and readiness which showed that he exerted inherent powers, and a command over nature which indicates its Lord. Upon some occasions he chose, for the instruction of the spectators, to direct their attention to his Father, from whom he acknowledged that he received all power; but at other times, he healed diseases, or raised the dead by a word. "I will, be thou clean." "Young man," speaking to him that was dead, "I say unto thee, arise." He taught men to infer from all his works, the union between his Father and him: and he interprets one of his miracles as a direct proof of his having power to do what belongs to God alone. Mark ii. Knowing, probably, that the sick of the palsy who was brought to him was humbled by disease, and prepared to receive with contrition the Lord's Christ, he said to him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The scribes, who were sitting by, reasoned in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" He discerned their reasonings, and he answered them by saying, "Whether is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" The same divine power which would have ren-

dered the one of these sayings, when pronounced by me, effectual, entitles me to use the other: "And therefore, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, arise." Here, then, Jesus takes to himself a right to forgive sins; that prerogative which the scribes, both by reason, and by express declarations of their own Scriptures, were taught to consider as belonging exclusively to God.

Such are the proofs of the superior nature of Jesus, which were laid before the world during his abode upon earth. The ablest critics on the New Testament have not agreed as to the inference which the apostles drew from these proofs, whether a belief of the divinity of Jesus accompanied their belief of his being the Messiah. The question appears to me problematical, and I do not think that the New Testament contains sufficient evidence to decide the point. But it is not of great importance. I observed, that the intimations of the divinity of our Lord, given during his life, were purposely obscure; and the apostles brought with them such prejudices, and met with such disappointment in their expectations, that it is no wonder if they did not reason from these intimations as they might have done. But there is recorded in the conclusion of the Gospel of John a declaration made by one of the apostles, after the resurrection of Jesus, of his having then attained the knowledge of that doctrine, which all these intimations seem intended to prepare them for receiving. Thomas, after his scruples were removed, answered and said to Jesus, John xx. 28, ὁ Κυριος μου, και ὁ Θεος μου; a conjunction of words probably from Ps. xxxv. 23, "Awake to my judgment, my God, and my Lord." The Socinians consider the words of Thomas as an exclamation of surprise upon seeing Jesus alive, or of gratitude to God who had raised him: My God and my Lord hath done this. But you will observe, it is expressly said that these words are addressed to Jesus, as an answer to what he had spoken, απεκριθη και ειπεν αυτῳ; and our Lord in his reply, considers them as a confession of Thomas's faith: "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Either, therefore, the nominative is here as in many other places, equivalent to the vocative, or the ellipsis is to be

supplied by εἰ σὺ. It is so natural to interpret these words as a declaration of Thomas's believing Jesus to be his God, that if our Lord had wished them not to be so understood, the ambiguity required a correction from him. But by accepting this declaration, and pronouncing his blessing upon those who, without the same evidence of sense, should make the same declaration, he approves of what Thomas had said, according to the obvious sense of the words, and teaches his followers in succeeding ages, to acknowledge him not only as their Master or Lord, but as their God.

CHAP. VII.

DIRECT PROOFS THAT CHRIST IS GOD.

THE confession made by the apostle Thomas may be considered as an introduction to those plain assertions of the divinity of Jesus, which are found in the writings of the apostles after the ascension of their Master: and the words of that confession direct us to attend, in the first place, to those passages in which Jesus Christ is called God. But, before we begin to examine them particularly, it is proper to advert to a difficulty attending the argument that is founded upon them.

SECTION I.

IF the name, God, were in Scripture appropriated exclusively to the Supreme Being, those passages of the New Testament in which it is applied to Jesus Christ would afford an unequivocal proof that he is not a creature. But the fact is, that although God, in the strict and proper sense of that word, is the name of the Almighty, there is a loose or figurative sense in which the use of it is very much extended. Admiration, which delights in magnifying its objects, has often prompted men to speak of their fellow-creatures in language to which no mortal is entitled. The expression in Homer, ισοθεος φως, we have copied in the epithets godlike and divine. By frequent use and by the progress of science these epithets have come to be regarded as figures of speech. But they were originally dictated by a principle which is most observable in ruder states of society, a proneness to consider all who discover eminent qualities

or extraordinary powers, as raised above the condition of human nature. The supposed existence of many of the heathen gods may be traced to this principle. The protectors and benefactors of their country, who had been admired during their life, were adored after their death, *i. e.* were enrolled amongst those higher orders of being, to whom it was conceived they had always been assimilated. Nay, there were instances in which the extravagance of flattery, and the excess of vanity which that flattery nourished, conspired in ascribing to a mortal, even while he remained upon earth, the name and honours of a god. The Scriptures, which must speak according to the sentiments and usages of those who are addressed, have adopted, in numberless places, this popular extension of the name of the Supreme Being. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me, as if any other could exist. The name, gods, is uniformly given in the Old Testament to those fictitious objects of worship before which the nations bowed: and the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 5, at the very time that he says, "An idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one," adds, "Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many." The Hebrew word for gods is applied to the angels "who excel in strength," and who dwell in heaven.* To rulers, because they are exalted above their subjects, it is said, "Ye are gods,"† The belly of the sensualists, to the service of which they are devoted, is called their god ;‡ and the Almighty himself says to Moses, Exod. vii. 1, "See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet," *i. e.* the king shall be astonished at the displays of thy power; and the orders which thou shalt issue to him shall be delivered by the mouth of Aaron, who shall thus be thy prophet to Pharaoh.

This extended figurative use of the name of God has suggested, to those who hold Jesus to be an exalted creature, the following system, which I give in the words of the author of the Essay on Spirit, p. 89. "As the self-existent cause, of whom are all things, can alone be pro-

* Psalm viii. 5. † Psalm lxxxii. 6. ‡ Phil. iii. 19.

perly called God, when this title is given in the Scriptures to any other being but the Father, we are to understand it only as expressive of some god-like power which hath been given or communicated to that being by God the Father. In this sense the application may be attributed to the Son, because, when all power in heaven and earth was given to him, he was made a god to those beings over whom that power was given." This system is supported by a remark borrowed from Sir Isaac Newton, and adopted by Dr. Clarke. "God," says Sir Isaac, "is a relative term, which has reference to subjects; and the word deity denotes the dominion of God over subjects:" and again, "we worship and adore God on account of his dominion." In like manner, Dr. Clarke, having laid it down as the 25th proposition in his scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, "The reason why the Son, in the Old Testament, is sometimes styled God, is not upon account of his metaphysical substance, how divine soever, but of his relative attributes and divine authority, communicated to him from the Father over us"—supports the proposition in the notes by the following reason—"The word God, when spoken of the Father himself, is never intended in Scripture to express philosophically his abstract metaphysical attributes, but to raise in us a notion of his attributes relative to us, his supreme dominion, authority, power, justice, goodness," &c. However profound the respect is which every one, who has imbibed the rudiments of science, must entertain for the name of Sir Isaac Newton, you will probably find reason to think, when you examine his writings upon subjects not capable of strict demonstration, that in them, according to the expression used by Bishop Horsley, the editor of his mathematical works, the great Newton went out like a common man. It has been shown by Dr. Waterland, in his Vindication of Christ's Divinity, and by Dr. Randolph, in his Vindication of the Trinity, that the name God, when applied in Scripture to the Supreme Being, involves in it the notion of the excellence of his nature, his wisdom, power, eternity, and all-sufficiency. I need not mention any other scripture-proof of this, than that decisive passage in Psalm xc.—"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

Dr. Waterland observes, that although dominion enters into the notion of God, yet it is the excellence of the divine nature manifested to us in his works, which is the object of our adoration, and the foundation of his dominion over us: so that the whole idea of God is that of an eternal, unchangeable, almighty Ruler and Protector. "If," says Dr. Randolph, p. 77, "God be only a relative term, which has reference to subjects, it follows that when there were no subjects, there was no God; and, consequently, either the creatures must have been some of them eternal, or there must have been a time when there was no God. Again, as the creatures are none of them necessarily existent, it will follow that God himself does not exist necessarily; and if we suppose God to annihilate all creatures, he would thereby annihilate his own deity, and cease to be God."

Although this reasoning should satisfy you that the word God is not merely a relative term, but that, in its proper sense, it implies a transcendent and independent excellence of nature, yet, at the same time, you will perceive that as it does imply dominion founded upon this excellence of nature it may be used relatively. My God, is that being whose infinite perfections are employed in my protection, and are an object of trust and submission to me. You will perceive, also, from this account of its true meaning, how it may be applied in a loose figurative sense to those who resemble the Supreme Being in any part of the whole idea annexed to the word; who have either attained any measure of the excellence of his nature, or who are intrusted by him with the exercise of any portion of his universal dominion.

It appears, from what has been said, that much circumspection is necessary in drawing an argument for the divinity of Jesus from those passages in which he is styled God; but it does not follow that the argument is necessarily inconclusive. There is hardly any word which is not occasionally used in a sense somewhat loose and figurative. It is one of the offices of sound criticism to judge whether we are to interpret words and phrases more or less strictly; and every accurate composition furnishes some discriminating circumstances which guide us in making this judgment. No person can be led into so gross

a mistake as to think Moses truly a god, when the Almighty says to him,—"See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh;" or civil magistrates truly partakers of a divine nature, when we read, "I said ye are gods; but ye shall die like men;" or the angels, however exalted above men, really like to God, when we read a command given them to worship another being; or the idols, before whom the nations bowed, worthy of trust, when the prophets, at the same time that they call them gods, say they are vanity, the work of errors, and have no power to do good or evil. It may be expected, from the analogy of these instances, that if this name be given in an improper figurative sense to any other person, more especially if it be often so given, we shall, in some way, be effectually guarded against mistake. The preservative, indeed, it has been said, against applying the term God in the highest sense to that person who is often called God, is to be found in those general declarations of Scripture that there is but one God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." "There is none good but one, that is God." But a little attention will satisfy you that this preservative is not sufficient; for the very person who is often called God in the New Testament, says, "I and the Father are one;" and this declaration, taken in conjunction with the expressions of the Divine unity, has appeared to many pious Christians, and to many of the most able and inquisitive men in all ages, to teach this system, that although there be but one God, the Person to whom that name is often given in the New Testament, is, in the highest sense of the word, God. The general preservative being thus insufficient to guard against mistake, if the highest sense of the word does not belong to that Person, there was much occasion for some marks of inferiority in the manner of its being applied to him which might suggest a lower sense. But if, instead of meeting with such marks, we meet with circumstances in the manner of his being called God, which imply that the word, in the strict and most exalted sense, belongs to him; and if the interpretation which we are thus led to give to the name correspond with other scripture-proofs of the Divinity of the Person to whom it is applied, we cannot avoid concluding, that the Scriptures, by calling Jesus Christ God, meant to teach us that he is God.

Let your examination of the texts which are commonly alleged for this purpose be scrupulous and suspicious. Every point of importance ought to be carefully examined; and it is the great advantage which accrues from diversity of opinion, that you are both guarded against that supine indolence with which assent is yielded to points in which men are generally agreed, and that you are furnished with the best means of attaining the truth, by having an opportunity of opposing to one another the arguments which very able men have adduced upon either side. I shall not, therefore, barely enumerate the texts in which Jesus is plainly called God, but I shall endeavour, in canvassing their meaning, to exhibit a specimen of that kind of scripture-criticism, without the continued exercise of which you can neither arrive at certainty, nor give a good reason of your own opinions upon any of the disputed questions of theology.

1. The first text is contained in that passage at the beginning of John's Gospel, which has already been fully explained. The whole passage was then vindicated, from the Sabellian interpretation, by showing that ὁ λογος is a distinct person from the Father, the same who is called in the 17th verse Jesus Christ. It was observed that in the second clause of the first verse, ὁ λογος ην προς τον Θεον, the word Θεος occurs in the highest sense; and that, as the form of the apostle's expression is to make the last word of one clause the first word of the succeeding, nothing but a purpose to mislead could have induced him, without any warning, to apply the name God to Jesus Christ in the beginning of the third clause, if he had meant it to be understood there in a sense different from that in which he had used it at the end of the second. It was observed, further, that the want of the article makes no essential difference, both because the analogy of the Greek language requires that the article should be prefixed to the subject rather than to the predicate of a proposition; and also, because Θεος, without the article, in the following verses of this chapter, and in many other places, is used in the highest sense. I have only to add to these observations, that Θεος cannot be understood here merely as a relative term, because it is not said Θεος εγενετο ὁ λογος, the word became, or was made God after the world was cre-

ated; but Θεος ην ὁ λογος, the word was God in the beginning, *i. e.* before he proceeded to make any thing, when there were no creatures and no subjects. Even Dr. Clarke, therefore, is obliged to paraphrase this expression thus: "Partaker of divine power and glory with and from the Father, not only before he was made flesh, or became man, but also before the world was." Now, if the manner in which the name God is here given to Jesus implies that the excellencies of the Divine nature belonged to him in the beginning when no creatures existed, and if there is no limitation of the degree in which he then possessed these excellencies, we seem warranted, by fair construction of the apostle's words, to infer from his being called God that he is God.

2. The second passage is Acts xx. 28. Προσεχετε ουν ἑαυτοις, και παντι τῳ ποιμνιῳ, εν ᾧ ὑμας το Πνευμα το ἁγιον εθετο ἐπισκοπους, ποιμαινειν την ἐκκλησιαν του Θεου, ἣν περιεποιησατο δια του ἰδιου αἱματος. The nominative to περιεποιησατο, which is not expressed in the Greek, and is supplied in our translation by the pronoun he, must be taken from the nearest substantive, Θεου. There is no other noun in the whole verse which admits of being made the nominative. But Θεος cannot here mean the Father; for the doctrine of the Gospel is, that we are redeemed or purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is an action appropriated to him in all the descriptions of the method of our salvation. He took a body that he might shed his blood for us; and the phrase ἰδιον αἱμα, the blood which was proper, peculiar to him, is used also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there opposed to αἱμα ἀλλοτριον, Heb. ix. 12, 25, to show that it was truly the blood of Christ, and of no other person, that was shed. The nominative to περιεποιησατο, therefore, whatever the word be, must mean Jesus Christ; and consequently in this place he is called God.

But it is proper to mention that the MSS. of the New Testament do not agree in reading Θεου. Grotius conjectures that the original reading was Χριστου, abbreviated into $\overline{\text{Χου}}$, and that out of $\overline{\text{Χου}}$ came $\overline{\Theta\text{ου}}$, for Θεου. But this conjecture is unsupported by any authority. Mr. Mill, who, in his most valuable edition of the Greek Testament, has collected the various readings, and mentioned the authorities by which every one of them is supported,

informs us that some read κυριου; others κυριου και Θεου; others, Θεου. Mr. Mill, who had access to judge of all the manuscripts, versions, and quotations in favour of each of the three, has no difficulty in preferring Θεου as the best supported. Griesbach, the latest editor of the New Testament, prefers κυριου, and says it is supported by the best and most ancient manuscripts, by the most ancient versions, and by the fathers. There is not any reason, from the nature of the thing, for giving up our reading, εκκλησια Θεου; it is a very common conjunction of words in the New Testament, and God's purchasing the church with his own blood, is an expression fully justified by the perfect union between the divine and human nature of Christ. At the same time, as κυριου appears to be a very ancient reading, which may be traced as far back as the time of Irenæus, in the second century, the present reading, however probable, cannot be certainly known to have been that which proceeded from the apostle; and no man who is guided purely by the love of truth, would choose to rest the divinity of our Saviour upon such questionable ground.

3. With regard to the next passage, Rom. ix. 5, there is no difficulty of this kind. Upon the authority of Mill, I say that all the manuscripts, and all the ancient versions support the present reading; and Griesbach does not propose any various reading. It is quoted by the fathers both before and after the Council of Nice, as a clear proof that Christ is God. And there does not appear the least ground for thinking that the text was ever read in any other manner. We are at liberty, therefore, to argue from the words as they now stand; and the only question is, what is the true interpretation of them? Dr. Clarke says, that the Greek words, being of ambiguous construction, admit of three different renderings; and I choose to quote him, because he expresses accurately and concisely what others have spread out more loosely. "They may signify either, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came: God, who is over all, be blessed for ever, Amen: or, Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all; God be blessed for ever, Amen: or, Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever, Amen." He admits that the third ren-

dering is the most obvious. But he inclines to prefer to t either the first or second, for these two reasons. 1. Ευλογητος is applied in Scripture to God the Father, and seems to have been used by the Jews as his proper name; for the High Priest said to Jesus on his trial, Συ ει ὁ Χριστος, ὁ υἱος του ευλογητου.* 2. ὁ επι παντων Θεος was generally understood to be a title so peculiar to God the Father, that it could not be applied to the Son, without danger of Sabellianism, *i. e.* of confounding the person of the Father and Son. These are Dr. Clarke's reasons for preferring either of the two first renderings to the third. But you will observe the present question is, whether these two titles are here applied to Christ. It is not an answer to this question to say that they are commonly applied to the Father. For it is possible, and there may be very good reasons for so doing, that names and titles which are generally appropriated to the Father, should, in some places, be given to the Son. We may learn from such occasional applications that the two persons are equal, and yet by attending to the discriminating marks which the Scriptures furnish, we may be preserved from the danger of confounding them.

It remains, then, to be examined, whether the construction of the words warrants, or seems to require, that these titles be, in this place, applied to Christ. In order to judge of this, it will be of use to attend to the four following observations:—

1. The first observation respects the clause το κατα σαρκα. The apostle, having expressed in the preceding verse the warmest affection for the Israelites, his countrymen, των συγγενων μου κατα σαρκα, enumerates in the 4th verse many privileges which distinguished his nation from every other; and he proceeds in his enumeration at the beginning of the 5th, ὡν οἱ πατερες, "Whose are the Fathers," *i. e.* Who are descended from the patriarchs, those venerable names that are found in Jewish history, εξ ὡν ὁ Χριστος, "and from whom is descended the Christ." The apostle adds a limiting clause, το κατα σαρκα, *secundum id quod pertinet ad carnem*, which implies that there were circumstances pertaining to the Christ, in respect of which he did not descend from the Israelites. Had the sentence

* Mark xiv. 61.

ended here, this clause would have been a warning to the reader that the Christ was not κατα παντα εξ αυτων; and the reader would have been left to supply, by his knowledge of the subject derived from other sources, what the respects are in which the Christ did not descend from the Israelites.

2. But you will observe, that the sentence does not appear to end with this limiting clause, because the form of the subsequent clause refers it to Χριστος. ὁ ων is a relative expression, which carries you back to the preceding nominative. This kind of reference is perfectly agreeable to the analogy of the Greek language. And it is used by this apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 31, where the form of expression is very similar.

3. You will observe that by thus referring the last clause to Χριστος you obtain an antithesis to το κατα σαρκα, and you discover the reason why the apostle introduced that restricting clause, viz. that the same person, who in one respect was descended from the Israelites, was also God over all, and in that respect certainly was not of human extraction. It is a most satisfying coincidence, that the connexion of the two clauses, which we have seen to be one strictly grammatical, furnishes that very information concerning the person mentioned, which, without this connexion, you would be obliged to derive from other sources of knowledge. And it is usual with the apostle, in some such manner as this, to complete the description of this person. Rom. i. 3, 4, the same person is the Son of God, and the descendant of David. He was visibly the descendant of David, by the manner of his birth: He was demonstrated to be the Son of God, by that attestation which the Holy Spirit gave to his claim when he was raised from the dead; and thus, in that passage, as well as in this, the apostle himself furnishes the antithesis to the restricting clause, κατα σαρκα.

4. Observe that the complete description, which the apostle, according to his manner in other places, and according to the expectation raised by the limiting clause, here gives of Χριστος is perfectly agreeable to the general scope of his discourse in this place. He wishes to magnify the honours of his nation; he has enumerated many of their privileges; and he concludes by crowning

all of them with the mention of this, that he who is God over all, when he assumed the human form, took a body from the seed of Israel.

These four observations seem to constitute a strong internal evidence in favour of the received translation; and this evidence is confirmed, when you attend to the consequences which result from adopting either of the other two renderings. If you put a point at κατα σαρκα, you obtain the first; "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came: God, who is over all, be blessed for ever,—Amen." By this rendering, the information concerning Χριστος is incomplete. There is introduced most abruptly a doxology to God the Father; and the form of expression in this doxology is not classical. For ὁ ων being a relative expression, which leads you back to a preceding word, the participle ων is redundant and improper, if a succeeding word, Θεος, be the nominative that agrees with it. If you put a point at παντων, you obtain what Dr. Clarke calls the second rendering; "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all: God be blessed for ever. Amen." By this rendering, the information concerning Χριστος is more complete, and ων is referred to a preceding nominative. But still there is the abrupt introduction of a doxology to a Person who had not been mentioned in the preceding clause; and there is a barrenness in the word Θεος, which in this situation requires to be clothed with an article, ὁ Θεος ευλογητος. It is further to be added, that the earliest Christian writers who quote this passage appear, by the course of the argument, to understand it as a plain declaration that Christ is God over all, blessed for ever. It is so rendered in the most ancient versions, and the possibility of another interpretation was not suggested till the sixteenth century. If the apostle, then, did not mean to give these titles to Jesus, he employs a form of expression, in which the natural grammatical construction of the words misled the whole Christian church for 1500 years. If he did mean to give them to Christ, then not only is this Person called God, but the name has such accompaniments that it must be understood in its most exalted sense. It is not said that he was appointed God to a particular district, but in the most absolute terms that he is God. Ὁ ων επι παντων Θεος, as it is

said of God the Father, Eph. iv. 6, Θεος και πατηρ παντων, ὁ επι παντων. To him is ascribed the title ευλογητος, which is used in the New Testament as the name of the Most High, and which was employed by the whole congregation of the Jews in their adoration of the God of Israel, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, Ευλογητος ει, Κυριε, ὁ Θεος Ισραηλ. We can place no reliance upon the language of Scripture, if there be an inferiority of nature in a Being thus designed. And the very purpose of the expressions here used seems to be, to teach us that every notion which can be conceived to be implied under the name God belongs to this Person as well as to the Father.

4. 1 Tim. iii. 16.—There is a difference of opinion with regard to the reading of one word in this verse. Two of the most ancient versions of the Greek Testament render the verse as if Θεος were not there. One Greek MS. has ὁ in place of Θεος; another has ὁς. It has hitherto been conjectured that Θεος is an interpolation made by some zealous Christian, who wished to add this verse to the other proofs of the divinity of our Saviour. But you will observe, that if the word be ὁ, the neuter of the relative, the antecedent is μυστηριον, *i. e.* the Gospel; in which case, the sense of several of the clauses will be forced and unnatural. The Gospel, "manifested in the flesh, seen of angels, received up into glory." If the word be ὁς, either the masculine of the relative, or the pronoun of the third person, it is not manifest who is meant. Jesus Christ, to whom, by this reading, all the clauses are referred, had not been mentioned in the preceding verse; and it is not according to the manner of a perspicuous or grammatical writer, to oblige his readers to educe an antecedent to ὁς, out of the amount of the preceding clause μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον. There is, thus, internal evidence that some substantive noun, marking the person spoken of, is the nominative to the succession of verbs; and all the Greek copies of the New Testament, except the two mentioned above, concur in reading Θεος as the nominative. It is true that we do not find this verse formerly quoted in the Arian controversy till the end of the fourth century, so that we have not an opportunity of judging by early quotations what was the original reading. But besides the authority of the most ancient Greek MSS. in support

of the word Θεος, there is this further evidence for the genuineness of that reading, that if Θεος be the nominative, we can give an easy explication of every one of the clauses in perfect agreement with the analogy of facts, and the language of the most ancient writers.

Having mentioned the MSS. of the New Testament, I shall notice, as a matter of curiosity, the state of the controverted word in the Alexandrian, one of the oldest and most respectable of these MSS. There has been some controversy with regard to the age of this manuscript. But there appears good reason to believe that it was written in the fourth century, not long after the Council of Nice, by the hand of an Egyptian lady. It was carried from Alexandria to Constantinople. It was given by the Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I. of England. It is now deposited in the British Museum; and a *fac simile*, *i. e.* an edition in which the form of the letter is an exact representation of the original, has been published by Mr. Woide. To understand his description of the controverted word, it should be known that abbreviations of such words as frequently occur being common in the ancient MSS. there was written, instead of Θεος, the Greek capital Θ and σ, with a line above the two letters, as a mark of the abbreviation. Mr. Woide says, "While I am writing, and looking at this place, which has been often too imprudently touched by the finger, I can hardly distinguish any thing but the short line of abbreviation, the point in the middle of the Θ now become faint, and some small remains of the circle round the point." Bishop Walton, who published a Polyglott edition of the New Testament, who has collected the various readings with great industry and fidelity, and who has mentioned the change upon this word in another MS. appears, by expressing no doubt with regard to the reading of Θεος in the Alexandrian MS. to have found it there in his time. Bishop Pearson, the very learned author of the Exposition of the Creed, says, that all the transverse line was even then so faint, that at first he thought the word was ὁς, yet, upon a narrower inspection, he saw marks which satisfied him, that there had been such a line; and Mr. Woide says, that, on first inspecting the manuscript, he agreed in opinion with Mill, although, as the Θ is now almost wholly effaced, he can-

not affirm the same from the present state of the MS. From this induction of particulars, it appears to be the opinion of the most learned men who have examined this subject, that Θεος is the genuine reading of the Alexandrian MS. coeval with the MS. itself. They think that the reading ὁς arose from the faintness of the transverse line, and that ὁς was changed into ὁ, because the neuter antecedent μυστηριον did not admit of a masculine relative. I observe that Griesbach prefers the reading ὁς, and has introduced it into the text: but I adhere to the opinion of former editors of the New Testament, supported, as they say, both by the Alexandrian, and by other very ancient MSS.; and you will observe, that if Θεος be the genuine reading in this passage, it affords an instance not only of the name being applied to Jesus, but of its being applied to him, when it is the subject not the predicate of a proposition. This is an advantage in the argument for the divinity of Jesus, because those who contend that he is called God only in an inferior sense of that word, affirm that the word may be predicated of him, but that when it is the subject of a proposition, it is always the name of the Father. Dr. Clarke's 11th Proposition is, "The Scripture, when it mentions God absolutely and by way of eminence, always means the Person of the Father, particularly when it is the subject of a proposition." The reason of the rule is, that when the word is predicated of Jesus, we are taught by this very circumstance, that it is predicated of a Person different from the Supreme Being, to give it certain limitations; but when it is the subject of a proposition, it is of necessity stated absolutely, without any sign of limitation. This would be the reason, if the Scriptures did make such a distinction in the use of this word. But here is an instance in direct opposition to Dr. Clarke's rule, where the Father cannot be meant, because he was never manifested in the flesh, where the person meant is Jesus Christ, and God is stated as the subject of the propositions affirmed concerning this person. Dr. Clarke, indeed, aware probably that the present reading cannot upon any sufficient grounds be rejected, says that it is, in reality, of no importance; for the sense is evident, that that person was manifested in the flesh whom John, in the beginning of his Gospel, styles Θεος. But this is

giving up his own distinction between the subject and the predicate of a proposition. For, in John, Θεος was the predicate; here Θεος is the subject: and, therefore, either the distinction which he made in his 11th Proposition is of no importance, or something more decisive with regard to the divinity of our Saviour is contained in this passage of Timothy than in the beginning of John's Gospel.

5. 1 John v. 20. In some manuscripts and versions, θεον is inserted after αληθινον in this verse. This is of no importance to the sense. But there is a controversy with regard to the application of the last clause; and that you may judge whether it is most natural to refer it to the Father, or to his Son Jesus Christ, I shall give two interpretations of it, in the words of Dr. Clarke and Dr. Randolph. Dr. Clarke's is, "The Son of God is come, and has enlightened the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the true God; and we are in that true God by or through his Son Jesus Christ. This God, whom the Son has given us an understanding to know, is the true God, and to be in him by his Son is eternal life. This is the worship of the true God, and the way to eternal life." Dr. Randolph's is, This Jesus Christ, who hath "given us an understanding to know him that is true, is the true God and eternal life." By this interpretation, ουτος is referred to the antecedent immediately preceding, which is also the principal subject of the whole verse; the tautology which Dr. Clarke's paraphrase fixes upon the apostle, "The true God is the true God," is avoided; the strongest reason is given for our being in the true God by Jesus Christ, that he himself is the true God, and so cannot mislead us: and, lastly, no more is affirmed concerning Jesus Christ than may be gathered from other places of John's writings. He is elsewhere called life.* "Eternal life," it is said, "is in the Son."† He is called God; he is called ὁ αληθινος.‡ And if John meant to teach us that he who is called God is truly God, it was most natural for him to join this adjective to the substantive when speaking of the Son, in the same manner as when speaking of the Father. This text was urged in the Council of Nice against the Arians; and they did not deny that

* 1 John i. 2. † 1 John v. 11. ‡ Rev. iii. 7, 14.

Jesus Christ is here called the true God; but contented themselves with saying, that if he was truly made God, he is the true God; an evasion which, joined to many others, produced the insertion of the term ὁμοούσιος in the orthodox creeds, as a term necessarily implying that the Son had not been made God, but is essentially God.

SECTION II.

To those passages in which the name of God is given to Jesus Christ, there naturally succeed those which ascribe to him attributes that constitute the character of the being to whom that name belongs.

The passages in which all power is ascribed to Jesus are innumerable; and they are various and strong in point of expression. But to the argument for his divinity that is derived from the extent of his power, it is opposed by the Arian system, that the Almighty is the sole fountain of all the power that is exerted throughout the universe, that we behold various measures of power communicated to the creatures with whom we converse, that the purposes of the divine government may require that a degree, infinitely beyond any which we behold, or which we can conceive, may be imparted to that being by whom God made, by whom he saves, and by whom he is to judge the world; but that as all the power in heaven and in earth which is given to Jesus Christ was derived from God, it redounds to the honour of Him from whom it proceeds, and does not, in fair argument, prove the divinity of him by whom it is received. This argument will appear to many to be counterbalanced by the manner in which the Scriptures speak of the power of Jesus. They will think it not likely that, if Jesus were a creature, any exertions which he was enabled to perform would be described in language by which they are assimilated, both in the greatness and in the facility of them, to those of the Creator. But as this language may not make the same impression upon every mind, and as it was acknowledged by Jesus, and is often said by his apostles, that he received all

power from God, we require, in arguing from the attributes of Jesus to his divinity, some attributes which do not admit of the same communication as power does, some which respect rather the manner of his being, than the extent of his exertions.

You may attend, first, to the time of his being. If Jesus is the Creator of all, it follows that he existed before any of those measures of time which are deduced from the motion or succession of created objects. In this sense the Arians allow eternity to Jesus, saying that he was begotten προ παντων αιωνων. But the Scriptures do not admit of any equivocation with regard to this attribute of Jesus, because the very same terms in which the eternity of God is described are applied to him; so that if the Scriptures are not sufficient to prove the eternity of the Son, neither do they prove the eternity of the Father. The ancients, all of whom applied the description of wisdom in Proverbs viii. to that person whom John calls λογος, argued from the similarity between Psalm xc. 2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, thou art God;" and a part of that chapter, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." If we consider that Christ is only a beautiful personification of wisdom, we shall not admit the force of this argument. But there are plain declarations to the same purpose in the book of the Revelation. And you will observe the reason why in that book they become plain. In the conversations with the apostles which the Gospels record, Jesus purposely obscured his divinity, because he was with them in the human form. But when Stephen, before his martyrdom, "looked up stedfastly to heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." When Jesus appeared to Paul after his ascension, "there was at mid-day a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun;" and out of that light the Lord spake to Paul, saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." In both instances, it was the full effulgence of the Shechinah, which every Jew regarded as the visible symbol of the divine presence. In like manner, in the book of the Revelation, Jesus speaks to his servant John from heaven in his glorified state. In the description of the person whom John saw, the most splendid objects in nature are brought to-

gether to convey some conception of his majesty. The brightness of the sun is the image of his countenance; his eyes are like a flame of fire; in his hand he wields seven stars; and when he speaks, it is not the weak sound of man's voice; it is as the sound of many waters, loud, continued, and impetuous. The manner in which Jesus speaks of himself, Rev. i. 7, 8, corresponds most properly to this description of his Majesty. It has been doubted whether the person speaking in the 8th verse is the Father or the Son. But you will find when you consider the whole passage, that by applying this verse to the Father there is a most abrupt change of person; whereas the context leads us to consider Jesus Christ, the person who is described in the 7th verse, and who begins to speak to John at the 11th, as giving this account of himself in the 8th.

The only reason for not following the direction of the context, in applying this 8th verse to Jesus Christ, is that the two last titles here introduced are considered as peculiar to the Father. But it has been clearly shown that this reason proceeds upon a mistake. Ὁ ων, και ὁ ην, και ὁ ερχομενος, is indeed used in the 4th verse, as the distinguishing character of the Father. But it is known by the learned that the amount of these words is the full exposition of the name Jehovah. Now we found, by comparing the Old and New Testament, many places in which the name Jehovah is given to Jesus; and our Lord seems to take it to himself by the peculiarity of that expression, John viii. 58, πριν Αβρααμ γενεσθαι, not εγω ην, but εγω ειμι. Παντοκρατωρ, a word expressing the most exalted power and the most universal dominion, the sovereign and proprietor of all, is used occasionally by the Septuagint as the translation of the same Hebrew phrase which they elsewhere render, Lord of Hosts, κυριος δυναμεων. But there are many places in the Old Testament, where that Hebrew phrase is applied to the angel of the covenant; and we learned from John xii. 41, that the glory of the Lord of hosts which Isaiah saw was the glory of Christ. The application then of the two last titles to Jesus does not afford any reason for transferring the whole verse from the Son to the Father; and the two first titles are elsewhere assumed by

the Son as his.* "I am the first and the last." "I am A and Ω, the beginning and the end." But these are the very descriptions which the Father gives of his eternity. Isaiah xliv. 6, "I am the first; and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Isaiah xliii. 10, "Before me was there no God formed, neither shall there be after me;" titles which, both by their natural import, and by their being consecrated as the description of God the Father, imply that a being to whom they are applied had no beginning, and shall have no end.

As the existence of Jesus is thus affirmed to be without beginning, so the Scriptures declare that it is not susceptible of change. An unchangeable existence is the character of Him "who is, who was, and who is to come." And the same thing, which is clearly implied in this name, is directly expressed in that part of Psalm cii. which we found the apostle to the Hebrews in the first chapter applying to Jesus. "Thou art the same, and thy years fail not:" and to this corresponds another expression, Heb. xiii. 8, Ιησους Χριστος χθες και σημερον ὁ αυτος, και εις τους αιωνας. For although the Arians understand these words to mean nothing more than this, that the doctrine of Christ is unchangeable, yet it is plain that this is a figurative sense of the words; that, according to the literal interpretation, they teach that the person of Jesus Christ is the same in all times, past, present, and future; that this literal meaning is the only sense which the words in the first chapter will bear; and that the unchangeableness of his person is the surest foundation of the unchangeableness of his doctrine. It is not easy for any one who attends to these things to believe that the apostle, in commending the steadfastness with which Christians ought to adhere to the faith, would choose to introduce an expression which so naturally leads his hearers to ascribe immutability to the author of that faith, if Jesus was not truly exempt from all the vicissitudes that are inseparable from created beings.

An existence thus without beginning, and continued in all times without change, is represented also as extended

* Rev. i. 17; iii. 14; xxii. 13.

through all space. While it is the essential condition of a creature to inhabit the spot assigned him, or to change his habitation according to the will of his Creator, and thus to be only in one place at one time, Jesus says of himself, John iii. 13, ὁ ἐκ του ουρανου καταβας, ὁ υἱος του ανθρωπου ὁ ων εν τῳ ουρανῳ: words which, according to their most natural exposition, imply that he who came down from heaven is in heaven. He promises, Matth. xviii. 20, οὐ γαρ εισι δυο η τρεις συνηγμενοι εις το εμον ονομα, εκει ειμι εν μεσῳ αυτων. He had said that his Gospel was to be preached in all the world. The fact has corresponded to the prophecy. Yet here is his promise, that in every place where his disciples are assembled, there he is; and in like manner he said to his apostles, when he was just about to ascend, Matt. xxviii. 20, ἰδου, εγω μεθ' ὑμων ειμι πασας τας ἡμερας, ἑως της συντελειας του αιωνος. It cannot be said by any one who understands the terms which he uses, that omnipresence, like power, may be communicated to a being who, in some former period of his existence, did not possess it. But even this assertion is precluded by the Scriptures, which ascribe this essential attribute to Jesus from the beginning, τα παντα εν αὐτῳ συνεστηκε; words which imply that his existence, since the creation, is co-extended with his works.

This extended existence is connected with the continued exercise of the most perfect intelligence. The knowledge possessed by the most exalted spirits must be limited in proportion to the bounds of the space which they inhabit. At least their knowledge of any thing beyond that space cannot be immediate, but must be communicated to them by other beings, or acquired by investigation. But of Jesus Christ it is said, that he knoweth all things; that he knows that God who is incomprehensible to man; that he knows what is in man.* His knowledge extends to that region which is removed from the eyes of mortals, and the knowledge and judgment of which the Almighty reserves to himself as his prerogative. "Thou, even thou only," says Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 39, "knowest the hearts of all the children of men." "I the Lord," says the Almighty, Jer. xvii. 10, "search the heart, I try

* Matt. xi. 27. John ii. 24, 25.

the reins." But Jesus, who, while he was upon earth, had discovered in numberless instances his knowledge of the heart, claims, in the book of the Revelation, this divine prerogative as his own, Rev. ii. 23, "All the churches shall know, ὁτι ἐγω ειμι ὁ ἐρευνων νεφρους και καρδιας."— And there is a description of ὁ λογος του Θεου, Heb. iv. 12, 13, which all the ancients apply to Christ the Word, in which it is said that the Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: and that there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight."

Thus we find the Scriptures ascribing to Jesus an existence without beginning, without change, without limitation, and connected, in the whole extent of space which it fills, with the exercise of the most perfect intelligence. These are the essential attributes of Deity. Measures of power may be communicated; degrees of wisdom and goodness may be imparted to created spirits: but our conceptions of God are confounded, and we lose sight of every circumstance by which he is characterized, if such a manner of existence as we have now described be common to him and any creature. When we recollect that the person to whom this manner of existence is ascribed is the Creator of the world; that by him all the intercourse between the Deity and the human race has been carried on from the beginning; that in the Old Testament he often bears the incommunicable name Jehovah, and that in the New Testament he is called God, in the proper sense of that word: when we lay together these things, which are the premises that have been established, the conclusion appears to be clear. The Scriptures mean to teach us that this person is God: and this conclusion will be confirmed when we find that in Scripture he is worshipped as God.

SECTION III.

THIS remaining ground of argument upon the subject of our Saviour's divinity it is proper that I should state fully, on account of the different opinions to which it has

given occasion, and the extent of some of the discussions in which the different opinions have been supported.

It appears to be agreeable to reason that worship, which is the humblest expression of entire veneration, and of a sense of dependence, should be appropriated to the Supreme Being. It was the character of heathen idolatry that even those, who believed in one Being far exalted in power and dignity above every other, gave to inferior deities testimonies of respect and submission the same in kind with those which he received. It was the great object of the law of Moses to form a people, who, instead of going after other gods, and bowing down before them, should confine their worship to the one Lord, the God of Israel.—Hence the books of the Old Testament abound with descriptions of the vanity of idols: the Almighty is there known by the name Jealous, claiming worship as his incommunicable right; and the spirit of the whole institution is thus expressed by Isaiah xlii. 8: "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." This spirit of the law seems to be incorporated into the Gospel, since our Lord, upon being tempted by the devil to worship him, says, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* And, upon being asked, Which is the first commandment of all?† he began his answer thus: "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

Upon a comparison of these quotations, it seems to be obvious that our Lord meant to exclude every other being from a competition with the Lord God, either in the affections of the heart, or in that expression of those affections, which is commonly called worship. Yet the Apostle to the Hebrews, i. 6, applies to Jesus Christ these words of the Psalmist, "let all the angels of God worship him." Our Lord says, John v. 23, "that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" words which may imply an equality in the degree, and a sameness in the expressions of honour. The Apostle to the Philippians ii. 10, says, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." During our Lord's intercourse with his

* Matt. iv. 10. † Mark xii 29.

apostles, the astonishment excited in their breast by some of his works produced expressions of reverence, which implied at least a momentary apprehension of his divine character; and as he was carried up from them into heaven, "they worshipped him."* The last words of the martyr Stephen were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."†

The Epistles contain many petitions which are directly addressed to Jesus, and in which his name is conjoined with that of God the Father. In the book of the Revelation Jesus receives the adoration of all the host of heaven. The twenty-four elders, who fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, fall down before the Lamb also; and John heard every creature in heaven saying, "Blessing and glory be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."‡

The Christian church, following these examples in Scripture, introduces the name of Jesus into the earliest doxologies that are recorded. Μεθ' οὐ σοι δοξα, και τῳ ἁγιῳ πνευματι, and Σοι δοξα, και τῳ σῳ παιδι Ιησου, και τῳ ἁγιῳ πνευματι, are forms found in the writings of Clemens Romanus, one of the apostolical fathers; and the conclusion of the prayer of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, which is preserved in a letter from the church of Smyrna, giving an account of his sufferings in the second century, runs thus: Ιησου Χριστου του αγαπητου σου παιδος· δι' οὐ σοι συν αυτῳ εν πνευματι ἁγιῳ δοξα και νυν, και εις τους μελλοντας αιωνας. Αμην. These doxologies of Clemens and Polycarp were not peculiar to them, but were agreeable to the practice of the church in their days; and from this venerable authority is derived that form of words which appears to have been used through all the ages of the Christian church, and is often repeated in the English liturgy, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

This account of the early doxologies is confirmed by Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, about the beginning of the second century, when, speaking of the Christians, he says, "Affirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae, vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire; carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invi-

* Luke xxiv. 52. † Acts vii. 59, 60. ‡ Rev. v. 13.

cem."* And Eusebius appears to be describing this *carmen*, or "the psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," of which the Apostle Paul speaks, Eph. v. 19, when he says in the fourth century, ψαλμοι και ωδαι αδελφων απαρχης ὑπο πιστων γραφεισαι, τον λογον του Θεου, τον Χριστον ὑμνουσι θεολογουντες.†

Although the Christians, in the earliest times, honoured the memory of martyrs by meeting at the places where they had suffered, by celebrating the anniversary days of their martyrdom, and by recommending the imitation of their example, they distinguished most scrupulously the honours which they paid to mortals from the worship which is due to God. For their principle, as it is expressed at a later period by Origen, was this, "God only is to be worshipped: other beings may be τιμης αξια ου μεν και προσκυνησεως και σεβασμου." And yet, notwithstanding this distinction, the two verbs προσκυνειν and σεβεσθαι are used by Justin Martyr in the second century to express the homage which belongs to the Son and the Spirit, as well as that which belongs to the Father. When the Christians were charged with atheism, because they did not worship idols, Justin Martyr answered, "We acknowledge that we are atheists in respect of those who are commonly called gods, but not in respect of the true God, the Father of all; both him, and the Son who came from him, and the prophetical Spirit, σεβομεθα και προσκυνουμεν, λογῳ και αληθειᾳ τιμωντες."‡

The particulars which I have mentioned may suffice as a specimen of the sentiments and practice of the first three centuries. I do not propose to entangle myself in that controversy with regard to the meaning of particular passages, which Dr. Priestley's hasty and superficial History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ has occasioned. It appears to me that his inaccuracy has been completely exposed by his able and learned antagonists, and that the more carefully any one examines the records which are preserved in the earliest Christian writers, he will be the more fully satisfied of the following points: that although a few individuals had begun, even then, to disseminate other opinions concerning the person of Christ, yet the

* Plin. Epist. Lib. X. 97.
† Eus. Hist. Ecc. Lib. V. cap. 28.
‡ Apol. Prima, p. 11.

great body of the Christian church considered him as entitled to receive the same worship with the Father, and were accustomed, in different parts of their public services of devotion, to ascribe this worship to him; that his title to this worship was in their minds connected with the divinity of his nature; and that the principle upon which their practice rested was the same which is expressed in the fourth century by Cyril, who, when the Christians were accused by the Emperor Julian of worshipping, like the Heathen, a dead man, thus answered: "We do not make a god of a man, but we worship him who is essentially God, and on that account is fit to be worshipped."*

This being the principle upon which the Christian church from the earliest times had worshipped our Saviour, when the Arians, in the fourth century, avowedly taught that Jesus Christ is a creature, and yet joined with other Christians in worshipping him, Athanasius, and all those writers who held the received opinion concerning his Person, charged them with idolatry, the same in kind as that which was practised among the heathen. Their argument was this. Heathen idolatry did not consist in ascribing the same dignity and rank to all the multiplicity of gods who were worshipped; for the cosmogony of the philosophers, which always exhibited some theory of the gods as a branch of the system of nature, generally proceeded upon the supposition of there being εἷς ἀγεννητος, και πολλοι γεννητοι; and the popular traditionary theology of the poets and the vulgar exalted the Father of gods and men far above the other objects of worship. But heathen idolatry consisted in this, that the same kind of worship was paid to deities who were acknowledged to be inferior and produced, as to that Being who was called supreme; and that men, proceeding gradually in this prostitution of that which belongs exclusively to one unoriginate Intelligence, came to worship animals which had their birth upon earth, and even inanimate objects, which, however splendid or useful, are confessedly the workmanship of some mind. This is the very account of the idolatry of the heathen which the Apostle Paul gives, Rom. i. 25, when he says, Εσεβασθησαν και ελατρευσαν τῃ κτισει παρα του

* Cyril. cont. Jul. Lib. VI. p. 203. Ed. Lips.

κτισαντα; not as in our translation, "worshipped and served the creature *more than* the Creator;" but, "by the side of the Creator, along with him." But these words, in which the apostle most accurately describes the practice of the heathen, may be literally applied to the Arians. For in their zeal to maintain the honour of God the Father, they had represented him as having, by an act of his will, produced out of nothing that glorious being who is called the Son, and after having thus separated the Son from the Father, as far as a creature is necessarily separated from the Creator, they worshipped this creature, λατρευσαν τῃ κτισει παρα τον κτισαντα. It is true that the heathen worshipped many created beings in conjunction with one supreme, whereas the Arians only worshipped one: but this circumstance did not constitute any essential difference between them. The principle upon which the Arians worshipped Christ was so far from being repugnant to the worship of other created beings, that it naturally led to this extension of worship. For, as Athanasius reasons, if Christ is worshipped on account of the superior eminence of his glory, it follows that every inferior being ought to worship its superior; αλλ' ουκ εστιν οὐτως κτισματι γαρ κτισμα ουπροσκυνει, αλλα κτισμα Θεον.*

Such was the reasoning of Athanasius and the writers of his day, when they accused the Arians of idolatry, for worshipping a being whom they considered as a creature. The answer which was then made to the charge is not extant, for almost all the writings of the ancient Arians are lost. But if we may judge of their answer from the replies of their adversaries, it appears to have been the same with that which is found in the writings of those who in later times have held their opinions.

The modern Arians attempt to vindicate themselves from the charge of idolatry by making a distinction between the worship which they pay to God the Father, and that which they pay to the Son: the former they call supreme divine worship, the latter, inferior religious worship. You will find amongst the tracts of Mr. Thomas Emlyn, a sincere and zealous assertor of Arian principles in the beginning of the eighteenth century, a treatise, entitled, A Vin-

* Athan. Orat. II. 23.

dication of the worship of the Lord Jesus on Unitarian principles. The plan of the treatise is to show, that supreme divine worship is, in Scripture, neither given nor required to be given to Jesus Christ; that the inferior religious worship of him, which the Scriptures allow and command, does not intrench upon the peculiar prerogative of God; and that as this mark of honour to the Saviour of the world, which the Scriptures expressly warrant, cannot be called will-worship, so it does not afford any sanction to Pagan or Popish idolatry. A distinction of the same kind is the subject of several of those propositions in which Dr. Clarke sets forth what he calls the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity; and this is his manner of stating it. "Supreme honour or worship is due to the person of the Father singly; and all prayers and praises ought primarily or ultimately to be directed to the person of the Father: the honour which the Scriptures direct to be paid to the Son is upon account of his actions and attributes relative to us, in accomplishing the dispensation of God towards mankind, and must always be understood as redounding ultimately to the glory of God the Father."

The Roman Catholics employ the same distinction between supreme and inferior worship, in vindication of their worshipping angels, the Virgin Mary, and departed saints. They have marked the distinction by λατρεια, and δουλεια, two words which were used promiscuously in ancient times, but which are carefully separated in the Church of Rome; the first being employed to express that worship which belongs to the Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of all; the second, to express that inferior worship which it appears to them lawful and fit to yield to beings created by God. They admit, that the practice of the heathen deserves the severest condemnation, because it was ειδωλολατρεια, *i. e. idololatria*, giving the highest worship to idols; but they contend that no part of their practice deserves the name of idolatry, because it is only δουλεια which they pay to any of the creatures whom they worship.

It is of no importance in the present argument to investigate at what period of the Christian church the distinction of these two words was invented. It is manifest that the distinction was unknown to the apostle Paul; for, speaking of the heathen, he says in one place, ελατρευσαν τη

κτισει παρα τον κτισαντα; * in another, εδουλευσατε τοις μη φυσει ουσι θεοις.† Athanasius, and the writers of his day, appear to have followed the Scripture in the promiscuous use of the two words; and the whole train of reasoning which they employ against the Arians shows that they were ignorant of that distinction betwixt supreme and inferior worship, which the two words have been employed to mark. The fallacy of the distinction has been fully exposed by the learned Bishop Stillingfleet, in several places of his works, and particularly in his Discourse concerning the Nature of Idolatry. It is touched upon occasionally by Dr. Cudworth, in his valuable work, entitled The Intellectual System of the Universe; and it is stated at great length and with much perspicuity, by Dr. Waterland, in his reply to Dr. Clarke, and by the other writers whom the revival of the Arian controversy in the last century has called forth in defence of the ancient faith of the church.

The arguments, opposed by the Athanasian writers to the answers by which the Arians endeavour to exculpate themselves from the charge of idolatry, may thus be stated in few words. There is no intimation in Scripture of any distinction between supreme or ultimate, and inferior or relative worship. On the other hand, worship, which is the expression of that veneration and that submission of soul which are due to God, is represented in Scripture as consisting of certain outward acts, such as adoration, prayer, offering sacrifice, burning sacrifice, burning incense, and making vows; all which acts are clearly discriminated from expressions of the respect due to creatures. Instead of allowing these acts of worship to be performed to creatures upon this provision that they ultimately tend to his glory, the Almighty hath chosen to guard the honour of his great name, by claiming them as exclusively his own; and we are not left to distinguish an act of worship performed to a creature, from the same act performed to the Creator, by the difference of intention, the different degrees of esteem which accompany the act; but we are required to follow the precise rule laid down in Scripture, according to which the wor-

* Rom. i. 25. † Gal. iv. 8.

ship of a creature never can agree with the worship of the Creator, but is directly opposite to it, being an invasion of the prerogative of the Supreme Being. The character which Paul gives of the heathen, is, εδουλευσατε τοις μη φυσει ουσι θεοις; and Christians, says one Father, return to heathenism, τη κτισει συναναπλεκοντες τον φυσει Θεον. "Either, therefore," says another, "let the Arians cease to worship him whom they call a creature, or cease to call him a creature whom they worship, lest, under the name of worship, they be found to commit sacrilege."

Such is the state of the argument upon both sides in the Arian controversy, with regard to the worship of Christ. I have now to direct your attention to the form which this subject has assumed in the Socinian controversy.

When Socinus, about the end of the sixteenth century, revived that opinion which had been broached by a few individuals in the first century, that Christ was a mere man, he did not so far depart from the practice of the Christian Church as to deny that Christ ought to be worshipped. But having represented the title of Christ to worship, as founded upon that universal dominion with which he was invested after his resurrection, Socinus endeavoured to show, that there is no instance in Scripture of our Saviour's being worshipped prior to his resurrection, and that all the instances of worship paid to him posterior to that period have a reference to the glory and power to which he was then exalted in consequence of the actions which he had done upon earth; and he maintained that, independently of any positive precept, the kingdom which our Lord received, and the authority which he continues to exercise in relation to us, create an obligation upon Christians to worship him. Several of those, who held the same opinion with Socinus concerning the person of Christ, did not agree with him in this speculation. They contended that if Christ be merely a man he never can be entitled to any other kind of honour than that which is due to human excellence, and that no degree of exaltation is a sufficient warrant to his disciples for ascribing to him that worship which belongs to God. Socinus did not perceive or did not choose to admit that this was a consequence which flowed from his principles.

There is extant in his works a dispute between him and Franciscus Davides, upon this subject. The dispute ended, like most others, without changing the opinion of either of the parties; Socinus continued to inveigh against those who refused to worship Christ; and he gave his consent that Franciscus Davides should be suspended from his public ministry, merely for his teaching that Christ ought not to be worshipped.

But there is so manifest a repugnancy between the worship of Christ and the pure principles of Socinianism, that it was impossible for any authority to preserve this branch of the practice of Socinus amongst those who received and followed out his system. Accordingly Dr Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, and all the Socinians of the last century, who call themselves Unitarians, have openly disclaimed the worship of Christ. While they profess the highest veneration for the name of Socinus, they consider his zeal for defending the worship of Christ as either an accommodation to established opinion, which he judged prudent at the first introduction of his system, or as a degree of prejudice and weakness of which even his mind was unable to divest itself: and they remove what they call an imperfection which adhered to the first sketch of the Socinian doctrine, by avowing as their principle, that religious worship is to be offered to one God the Father only, as his incommunicable honour and prerogative. Their chief objections to the liturgy of the church of England amount to this, that it contains prayers addressed to Jesus Christ; and their practice in their meetings is to avoid every form of words which seems to imply that he is an object of worship.

The arguments by which the modern Unitarians vindicate this practice, appear to derive considerable advantage from the different acceptations of προσκυνεω, the word which, both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, is translated worship. It sometimes marks adoration, and sometimes nothing more than that prostration of the body which was common in eastern countries upon the appearance of a superior. It is used in this last sense by Herodotus,* and even in the Old Testament. Thus, I Chron. xxix. 20, we read, "that all the congregation bowed down

* Herod. Polym. 135.

their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king," *i. e.* they bowed their bodies in testimony of reverence both for the God and for the king of Israel. Nay, in one of our Lord's parables, Matt. xviii. 26, it is said, that the servant falling down before his Master, "προσεκυνει αυτῳ." But the advantage which the Unitarians derive from this ambiguous use of the Greek word is more apparent than real. For besides that circumstances will almost always clearly indicate whether the action marked by προσκυνεω expresses, in that case, religious homage, or merely the highest degree of civil respect, we derive our warrant for worshipping Christ not simply from the application of that word, but from a variety of acts which, although they are by no means implied in the literal sense of προσκυνεω, go to make up the general notion of worship, and in which there is nothing equivocal. We say that there are in Scripture many instances of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer, being addressed to Jesus, all of which imply a conviction in the worshippers that his knowledge and power are not limited, and that he is everywhere present: and from these instances, taken in conjunction with the command to honour him even as we honour the Father,* and with the revelation of the glory of his character, and his relation to us, we infer that it is not only lawful but proper for Christians to worship him.

The Unitarians endeavour to invalidate this conclusion by a laboured attempt to explain the Scriptures in a consistency with their own system. They say, that the thanksgivings which we quote are mere effusions of gratitude; that the prayers are only wishes; that the invocation of Stephen in the book of Acts and the doxologies in the book of the Revelation were addressed to Jesus when he was present, and do not warrant us to pray to him or praise him when he is absent. It is impossible to enter into the detail of their criticisms. But if you take the instances of worship being paid to Jesus, which Dr. Clarke has very fairly collected in his Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, and read at the same time the commentaries upon these texts, which Mr. Lindsey has inserted in the sequel to his Apology, and in a separate dissertation upon

* John v. 23.

this subject, you will have an excellent specimen of that kind of Scripture-criticism which the Socinians are often obliged to employ in defence of different parts of their system, and which, in giving a sense of Scripture far from being obvious, requires such an expense of ingenuity as has always appeared to me to be of itself a sufficient proof that their opinions are not founded in Scripture.

The controversy between the Athanasians, the Arians, and the Socinians, upon the points of which we have been speaking, may be thus shortly stated. The Athanasian syllogism is, none but God ought to be worshipped: Jesus Christ is worshipped in Scripture; therefore he is God. The Arian syllogism is, supreme worship is due to God, but inferior worship may be paid to a creature: It is only inferior worship that is paid to Jesus Christ in Scripture; therefore, although he be worshipped, he is a creature. The Socinian syllogism is, none but God ought to be worshipped: Christ is not God; therefore all the passages of Scripture, which seem to ascribe worship to him, are to be explained in such a sense as to be consistent with this conclusion. The Socinians adopt the major proposition of the Athanasian syllogism, that Christ is not to be worshipped. The Arians deny it.

The manner in which the Arians attempt to evade the force of the major proposition is by a distinction which, we say, has no foundation in Scripture. The manner in which the Socinians attempt to evade the force of the minor proposition is by a kind of criticism which, we say, does violence to Scripture. If it shall appear to you, upon examining the subject, that we are right in saying so, you will be struck with the simplicity and consistency of the Athanasian system. According to that system, the Scriptures having ascribed to Jesus the names, the attributes, and the actions of God, and having expressly declared that he is God, give us a practical proof that those, whom the Spirit guided into all truth, considered him as God, by their paying him that worship which the Scriptures declare to be the incommunicable prerogative of the Supreme Being. Here is a chain of argument in which nothing appears to be wanting. All the parts of it hang together, and support one another. It produced a conviction of the divinity of our Saviour in the minds of those

to whom it was first proposed; and the authority of example, the respect which it is natural for us to pay to the opinions of those who were placed in a most favourable situation for judging, is thus superinduced to warrant that conclusion which the declarations of Scripture appear to us to establish, that Jesus Christ is truly and essentially God.

CHAP. VIII.

UNION OF NATURES IN CHRIST.

It is one part of the third opinion concerning the person of Christ, that he is truly God. But the whole history of his life exhibits him as a man; and the constant language of Scripture upon this head, which has led the Socinians to consider him as merely a man, is the ground of the other part of the third opinion concerning his person, that he is not only truly God, but also truly man.

The proofs of the human nature of Christ found in the Scriptures are obvious to the plainest understanding; and whatever difficulties may occur to those who attempt to speculate upon the subject, the opinion itself has been generally held in the Christian church. Although Jesus upon some occasions assumes this exalted title, "the Son of God," he generally calls himself by a name most significant of his humanity, "the Son of Man." We found by an analysis of the beginning of John's Gospel, that "the Word," who "in the beginning was with God, and was God," is called Jesus Christ; and we read elsewhere of Jesus Christ, that he was "wearied with his journey,"* that "he was hungry,"† that "he ate and drank,"‡ that his soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death,"§ that "he gave up the ghost, that he was buried, and that he rose from the grave."‖

These propositions, so opposite to one another, imply a corresponding difference of nature in the person concerning whom all of them are affirmed. There is an illusion throughout the New Testament, if he who made the worlds, and he who "was an hungered," is not the same person; and yet we have seen that he who made the worlds was God, and we cannot doubt that he who was an hungered

* John iv. 6. † Mark xi. 12. ‡ Mark ii. 14.
§ Matth. xxvi. 38. ‖ John xix. xx.

was man. The inference thus clearly drawn, from laying different passages together, is confirmed by an examination of those places which present in one view the divine and the human nature of the man Christ Jesus. Of this kind are the three following.

John i. 14. Και ὁ λογος σαρξ εγενετο. The Socinians, in conformity to their interpretation of the first part of the chapter, understand this phrase to mean nothing more than that the reason or wisdom of God resided in the man Jesus Christ, and might thus figuratively be said to have become flesh. But all those, both Athanasians and Arians, who consider λογος in the first verse as denoting a person, must understand what is here said of him as meaning, "this person became flesh, or was incarnate." And all that is said of the λογος in the former verse may be applied to the person who, at a certain time, became flesh.

Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. The apostle is recommending to Christians humility from the example of Jesus Christ, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." In order to explain what mind was in Christ, or what degree of humility he exhibited, the apostle describes two different states of Christ, one which he resigned, and another to which he submitted; and his humility consisted in descending from the one to the other. The first state is expressed by this phrase, ὁς εν μορφη Θεου ὑπαρχων. The Socinians, who do not admit that Jesus Christ ever was in any state more dignified than that of a man, have no other mode of explaining this phrase, but by applying it to those extraordinary displays of divine wisdom and power which Jesus exhibited upon earth, and by which he who was merely a man, appeared to the eyes of the beholders to be God. But this interpretation, besides that it is by no means adequate to the import of the phrase, inverts the order, and impairs the force of the whole passage. It represents the μορφη Θεου as posterior to the κενωσις, and the humility of Christ as consisting purely in this, that he did not employ his extraordinary powers in preserving his life. Whereas the μορφη Θεου appears intended by the apostle to represent a state prior to the κενωσις, by which means the whole of Christ's appearance upon earth becomes an example of humility.

The Arians, who admit that Jesus Christ often appeared under the Old Testament, in the person, and by the name of Jehovah, employ these appearances to explain this phrase, "Who, being before his incarnation in the form of God, appeared during his life in the form of a man." The Athanasians, who believe that Jesus is essentially God, understand by μορφη Θεου, not a character which he occasionally personated, but those glories of the divine nature which from eternity belonged to him, which, in reference to the phrase used in the 4th verse, may be called τα ἑαυτου, and which correspond to the concluding clause of the 6th verse, το ειναι ισα Θεῳ. Whether the Arian or Athanasian interpretation of μορφη Θεου, be adopted, Jesus Christ did display great humility in becoming a man. But the Arians find it difficult to reconcile their system with the second clause of the 6th verse. They cannot adopt our translation, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," because that clearly implies that he was once equal with God, and that he considered this equality as his right, which he was not under any obligation to resign. They translate the clause, therefore, thus, "He did not look upon the being honoured equally with God, as a prize to be snatched, eagerly laid hold of. He did not covet it." Dr. Clarke has defended this translation with the ability of a scholar; and, in my opinion, as far as ἁρπαγμον ἡγησατο is concerned, with success. For whether we consider these two words in themselves, or compare the few places of other authors where they occur, it appears more natural to render them, "thought it a prey of which he was eager or tenacious," than "thought it a robbery." But if you read the perspicuous able commentary which Bishop Sherlock has given in the first three parts of his discourse on this text, at the beginning of the fourth volume of his discourses, you will perceive that, although the Arians are delivered from that direct contradiction to their system which the translation in our Bible bears, yet even their own translation does not give any essential support to their system. For το ειναι ισα Θεῳ refers to the same thing with μορφη Θεου, and, being set in opposition to the appearance of a creature which Christ assumed, implies an essential equality with God. But if he had no right to this equality, it is a strange instance of humility in

Christ, that he had not the presumption to lay hold of it. Whereas if he had a right, his not eagerly retaining it, but laying aside the appearance of it, was the greatest humility. So that the apostle's argument turns upon the right of Christ to be like God; and the only difference created by the two translations is this—according to our translation, the last clause of the 6th verse is a continuation of the description of the prior state of Christ: according to Dr. Clarke's, it is the beginning of the description of his humiliation. You will perceive the course of the apostle's argument in the following paraphrase: "Jesus Christ, who, before he appeared upon earth, was in the form of God, *i. e.* possessed all the glories of the divine nature, was not tenacious of this equality with God, did not consider it as a thing to be eagerly grasped, but emptied himself. He could not cease to be God, but he divested himself of those glories which constitute the form of God, having taken the form of a servant. Had he appeared as an angel, this would have been taking, in respect of God, the form of a servant; and therefore it is added as the specific description of that form of a servant which he took, having become in the likeness of men; and although he retained the nature of God, yet, as to outward appearance or fashion, being found by those who sought to take away his life, such as man is, he humbled himself so far, that, when he had power to retain his life, he surrendered it, and submitted to an ignominious death."

By this natural interpretation, the succession of propositions contained in this passage teaches us that the same person who was God became man; and since he who was once God must be always God, the nature of God being unchangeable, it follows that he was at the same time both God and man.

The same thing is intimated less clearly, but with a little attention it will appear not less exclusively, in the third passage, Heb. ii. 14, 16. The apostle is giving a reason why the Captain of Salvation took part of flesh and blood. The reason is, that he might have it in his power to die, because his death was to be the instrument of our deliverance from death. But as nobody thinks of giving a reason why a man should be a man, the apostle's giving a reason why Christ took part of flesh and blood implies

that this was not the necessary condition of his being, but that it was a matter of choice; and therefore it follows not only that he existed before he made the choice, but that he had it in his power to make a different choice, *i. e.* that he existed in a state which admitted of his choosing a more splendid appearance, had he so inclined. That this state was superior to the condition of angels, is made plain by the 16th verse, the most literal and proper rendering of which is, "For truly he lays not hold of angels, but he lays hold of the seed of Abraham," ὅθεν, upon account of his making which, choice, it was necessary that he should in all things be made like his brethren. Now, whether "laying hold of angels" implies, as the Socinians are fond of interpreting the phrase, "helping angels," because they do not suppose that Christ had it in his power to be like an angel: or whether it means, according to our translation, laying hold of them, so as to assume their nature and form, the phrase is very improper, unless the Being to whom it is applied was so far superior to angels, that he had it in his power to pass by them or not, to lay hold of them or not, as he pleased. And this Being, who, in his antecedent state of existence was superior to angels, it is here said, took part of flesh and blood, which are the characteristics of men; and because he was thus made in all things like them, they are called his brethren.

The review of these three passages suggests the whole of the argument upon this subject, which may be thus stated in a few words. The names, the characters, the actions, and the honours of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ: the affections, the infirmities, and the sufferings of man are also ascribed to Jesus Christ; therefore in him the divine and human natures were united, or the same Person is both God and man.

It would seem that this inference should be admitted by all those who pay a due regard to the plain declarations of Scripture: and, had Christians rested in this inference, there could not have been much variety of opinion upon the subject. But when men began to speculate concerning the manner of that union which the Scriptures teach us to believe, they soon went far beyond the measure of information which the Scriptures afford. They

multiplied words without having clear ideas; their meaning being, in this way, never perfectly apprehended by themselves was readily misunderstood by others; and the controversies upon this point, which, at the beginning, involved a fundamental article of the Christian faith, degenerated at last into a verbal dispute, conducted with much acrimony in the mere jargon of metaphysics.

Those sects who considered Jesus as merely a man, whatever was the date of their existence, or whatever were the numbers that embraced their tenets, escaped by the simplicity of their system from this controversy. But the great body of Christians, who learned from Scripture that Jesus Christ was more than man, differed widely in their speculations as to the manner of reconciling the opposite descriptions of his Person; and, in the early ages of Christianity, the dispute was of much importance, because it turned upon the reality of the two natures, or the permanency of their union.

In the history of this controversy our attention is first engaged by the opinion of the Gnostics. All the Gnostics agreed in considering the Christ as an emanation from the Supreme Mind, an Æon of the highest order sent from the Pleroma, *i. e.* the space inhabited by those spirits who had emanated from the Supreme Mind, to deliver the human race. But as the fundamental principle of their system was the inherent and incorrigible depravity of matter, all of them agreed also in thinking it impossible that so exalted a spirit was truly and permanently united to a gross material substance. Some of them, therefore, supposed that Jesus, although made in the likeness of men, was not really a man; that the body which the Jews saw was either a phantasm that played upon their senses, or, if it had a real existence, was a spiritual substance, not formed of the same corruptible materials with our bodies, standing in no need of those supplies which it seemed to receive, and incapable of those sufferings which it seemed to endure. Those Gnostics, who considered Jesus as a man only in appearance, are known by the name Δοκηται. Other Gnostics, who found it difficult to reconcile the mere phantasm of a body with the history of Jesus Christ, followed the more substantial system of Cerinthus, who held that Jesus of Nazareth was a man born like other

men, and not distinguished from his countrymen, till he was thirty years of age, in any other way than by the innocence of his life; that when he came to John to be baptized, that exalted Æon called the Christ descended upon him in the form of a dove, or in the manner in which a dove descends, and continued to inhabit his body during the period of his ministry; that the person called Jesus Christ was a man, all whose actions were directed by the Æon who dwelt within him, but that when he was delivered into the hands of the Jews, the Christ returned to the Pleroma, and Jesus was left to suffer and to die.

It is a tradition derived from the earliest Christian writers, that the Apostle John lived to witness both these branches of the Gnostic heresy, and that he wrote his Gospel and his Epistles on purpose to correct their errors; and this tradition is very much confirmed by our observing that by means of the continual reference which his writings bear to the tenets that were then spreading among Christians, we are able to derive from them the clearest proofs both of the divinity and of the humanity of our Saviour. Thus, in his Gospel, as he begins with declaring "the word was God," so he says at the 14th verse, "the word was made flesh:" and in his 1st Epistle, v. 20, as he says of Jesus Christ, "This is the true God," so he bears his testimony both against the Cerinthians, who separated Jesus from the Christ, (ii. 22,) and against the Docetæ, who said that Jesus Christ was not truly a man. (iv. 2, 3.) The phrase used in the last of these passages, "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," furnishes an argument which Dr. Horsley has urged with his wonted acuteness against the modern Unitarians. The argument is this: Unless the words "in the flesh" are mere expletives, they limit the words "is come" to some particular manner of coming. This limitation either is nugatory, or it presumes a possibility of other ways of coming. But it was not possible for a mere man to come otherwise than in the flesh; therefore Jesus Christ is more than man. And thus in this proposition "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh," the denial of which John makes a mark of Antichrist, there is an allusion both to the divinity and to the incarnation of our Saviour.

While the general principles of the Gnostics led them

to deny the reality of Christ's body, it is the character of that system which is known by the name of the Apollinarian, to ascribe to our Saviour a true body, but not a human soul. We have reason to believe that the ancient Arians, who held Christ to be the most exalted spirit that had proceeded from God, considered this spirit as performing the functions of a human soul in the body which it assumed, so that, as in all mere men, there is the union of a body with a human soul, there was in the person of Jesus Christ the union of a body with an angelical spirit. Apollinaris did not hold the distinguishing tenet of Arius. He was the friend of Athanasius, himself an able and zealous assertor of the divinity of Christ. But he conceived that the most natural way of explaining the incarnation of the Son of God was to consider the Godhead as supplying the place of a soul, and the body which the Godhead animated, as in all respects like the bodies of other men; and as this system appeared to degrade the Godhead, by subjecting it to all the sensations of a human soul, Apollinaris endeavoured to obviate the objection arising from this degradation, by recurring to a distinction well known in the ancient Greek philosophy; a distinction *between* ψυχη, the sensitive soul which man has *in common with* the other animals, and νους, the rational soul *by which he* is raised above them. Apollinaris held *that Christ* assumed, together with a body, the ψυχη, *or principle* of animal life; but that he did not assume *the* νους, *the* principle of thought and reason, because *all the offices* which belong to this higher power were *in him performed* by the Godhead.

The modern Arians, who, in the *last century*, have revived the ancient tenet, that Christ *the* Word is an exalted angel, incline to adopt the *Apollinarian* system. It appears to them superfluous to place the spirit of an angel and the spirit of a man in the same body; and they say, that the easiest explication of this phrase, "the Word was made flesh," that which preserves the most proper unity of person, and renders Jesus Christ, strictly speaking, one intelligent agent, is this, that the spirit of the angel, who is called the Word, inhabited and animated a human body. The modern Arians defend this Apollinarian system by the following arguments. As the body is the only part of hu-

man nature which we perceive, and as we are entirely ignorant of the manner of the union between body and mind, the name man is properly applied to every being which possesses a human body, performing its functions under the guidance of a spirit, whatever the origin or rank of that spirit be: and, accordingly, those inhabitants of heaven who appeared frequently under the Old Testament, and the angels who appeared at the resurrection of Jesus, are called men, because they had the appearance of men, although it was never supposed that they had a human soul. The Scriptures speak of Christ's coming in the flesh, of his being made flesh, of his taking part of flesh and blood: they never speak of his taking a soul; and all the phrases, in which the soul and spirit of Christ are mentioned, do not denote different parts of the same person, but are Hebrew idioms which mean nothing more than Christ himself.

The answers to these arguments of the modern Arians which readily occur are the following: that Jesus Christ was not truly a man, unless he assumed that kind of spirit which is characteristical of the human species; that man is what he is by his mind more than by his body; and that if our Lord stooped to the external form, it is not likely that he would disdain to connect himself with the spiritual inhabitant; that there is no analogy between the transient appearances of angels recorded in Scripture, and the permanent complete humanity manifested in the words, the actions, and the sufferings of him who "dwelt among" men; and that the expressions of Scripture referring to the soul of Christ are so many, and repeated in such a variety of forms, that a great part of the history of Jesus is enigmatical and illusory, unless he was truly a man in respect of his soul as well as in respect of his body.

Such are the arguments which our habits and modes of thinking suggest, and which the Athanasians and Socinians of our days conspire in opposing to the Apollinarian system. But there is another argument which was considered in ancient times as a more effectual refutation of the Apollinarian system than any that I have mentioned. It was universally believed in the first ages of the Christian church that there is a place for departed spirits, where the souls of the righteous rest in joy and hope, al-

though they are not put in possession of the complete happiness of heaven, until they are reunited to their bodies at the last day. This place was called *Hades*, hell, a word which, in ecclesiastical writers, denoted originally not a state of punishment, but merely the habitation of departed spirits, as the grave is the receptacle of the body. Of this place David was supposed to speak in Psalm xvi. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" and, as the Apostle Peter expressly applies these words to Jesus, Acts ii. 31, when he says, "David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption," it was believed on this authority, that when the body of Christ was committed to the grave, his soul went to the place of departed spirits, and remained there till his resurrection. But if the soul of Christ went to the place of departed spirits, it follows that he had a complete human soul, and was in this respect, as well as in respect of his body, made like his brethren. For the ψυχη, the sensitive soul of animals, does not enter that place: the Godhead cannot be supposed to have been confined there; and therefore it could be nothing but the νους, the reasoning soul, which the Apollinarian system denied to Christ, that waited, in the same place with other souls, the resurrection of his body.

When the council of Constantinople, in the end of the fourth century, the second of those which are called general councils, condemned the opinion of Apollinaris, they declared that they considered Christ as being ουτε αψυχον, ουτε ανουν, and that they did not hold ατιλη την της σαρκος οικονομιαν, *i. e.* that they believed him to be truly and completely a man. The church did not long rest in this acknowledgment of that truth which the Scriptures seem to teach upon this subject, but soon began to speculate concerning the manner in which this complete human nature is united with the Godhead, and from their speculations upon this incomprehensible point there arose different sects, whose peculiar tenets are still retained in some parts of the Christian church. It is the business of ecclesiastical history to trace the origin and the progress of these sects. I shall content myself with marking their distinguishing opinions, and, instead of attempting to follow

them through the labyrinth of metaphysics, in which they contended with one another, I shall barely suggest the general views upon which the different opinions proceeded.

Nestorius, who had been taught to distinguish accurately between the divine and human nature of Christ, was offended with some expressions commonly used by Christians in the beginning of the fifth century, which seemed to destroy that distinction, and particularly with their calling the virgin Mary Θεοτοκος, as if it were possible for the Godhead to be born. His zeal provoked opposition; in the eagerness of controversy he was led to use unguarded expressions; and he was condemned by the third of the general councils, the council of Ephesus, in the year 431. It is a matter of doubt whether the opinions of Nestorius, if he had been allowed by his adversaries fairly to explain them, would have appeared inconsistent with the doctrine established by the council of Ephesus, that Christ is one person, in whom two natures were most closely united. But whatever was the extent of the error of Nestorius, from him is derived that system concerning the incarnation of Christ, which is held by a large body of Christians in Chaldea, Assyria, and other regions of the east, and which is known in the ecclesiastical history of the west by the name of the Nestorian heresy. The object of the Nestorians is to avoid every appearance of ascribing to the divinity of Christ the weakness of humanity; and therefore they distinguish between Christ, and God who dwelt in Christ as in a temple. They say that from the moment of the virgin's conception there commenced an intimate and indissoluble union between Christ and God, that these two persons presented in Jesus Christ one προσωπον, or aspect, but that the union between them is merely an union of will and affection, such in kind as that which subsists between two friends, although much closer in degree.

Opposite to the Nestorian opinion is the Eutychian, which derives its name from Eutyches, an abbot of Constantinople, who, about the middle of the fifth century, in his zeal to avoid the errors of Nestorius, was carried to he other extreme. Those who did not hold the Nestorian opinions had been accustomed to speak of the "one incarnate nature" of Christ. But Eutyches used this phrase

in such a manner as to appear to teach that the humanna-ture of Christ was absorbed in the divine, and that his body had no real existence. This opinion was condemned in the year 451, by the council of Chalcedon, the fourth general council, which declared, as the faith of the catholic church, that Christ is one person; that in this unity of person there are two natures, the divine and the human; and that there is no change, or mixture, or confusion of these two natures, but that each retains its distinguishing properties. The decree of Chalcedon was not universally submitted to. But many of the successors of Eutyches, wishing to avoid the palpable absurdity which was ascribed to him, of supposing that one nature was absorbed by another, and anxious at the same time to preserve that unity which the Nestorians divided, declared their faith to be, that in Christ there is one nature, but that this nature is twofold or compounded.

From this tenet, the meaning of which I do not pretend to explain, the successors of Eutyches derive the name of Monophysites; and from Jacob Baradæus, who in the following century was a zealous and successful preacher of the system of the Monophysites, they are more commonly known by the name of Jacobites. The Monophysites or Jacobites are found chiefly near the Euphrates and Tigris; they are much less numerous than the Nestorians; and although they profess to have corrected the errors which were supposed to adhere to the Eutychian heresy, they may be considered as having formed their peculiar opinions upon the general principles of that system.

The Monothelites, an ancient sect, of whom a remnant is found in the neighbourhood of Mount Libanus, disclaim any connexion with Eutyches, and agree with the Catholics in ascribing two natures to Christ; but they have received their name from their conceiving that Christ, being one Person, can have only one will: whereas the Catholics, considering both natures as complete, think it essential to each to have a will, and say that every inconvenience, which can be supposed to arise from two wills in one person, is removed by the perfect harmony between that will which belongs to the divine, and that which belongs to the human nature of Christ.

Only one circumstance remains to be stated, in order to

complete the view of the doctrine of the church, concerning the incarnation of the Son of God. It is what is called the miraculous conception of our Saviour; by which is meant that the human nature of Christ was formed, not in the ordinary method of generation, but out of the substance of the Virgin Mary, by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost.

The evidence upon which this article of the Christian faith rests is found in Matt. i. 18—23, and in the more particular narration which Luke has given in the first chapter of his Gospel. If we admit this evidence of the fact, we can discern the emphatical meaning of the appellation given to the Saviour, when he is called the seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15; we can perceive the meaning of a phrase which Luke has introduced into the genealogy of Jesus, Luke iii. 23, and of which otherwise it is not possible to give a good account; ων, ὡς ἐνομιζετο, υἱος Ιωσηφ; and we can discover a peculiar significancy in the expression of the Apostle Paul, Gal. iv. 4, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman."

Some sects of early Christians, whose principles did not allow them to admit the miraculous conception, got rid of this article of the Christian faith by rejecting the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel, the only Gospel which they received; and Dr. Priestley has spent half a volume in attempting to show that this doctrine may be false, although it is delivered by two Evangelists. Upon those who believe the authenticity and inspiration of Scripture, his argument will make no impression, and as these are the two fundamental principles upon which my course proceeds, I will not, at this stage of our progress, spend any time in combating the reasons which Dr. Priestley presumes to oppose to the authority of Scripture. The miraculous conception, the last article, as Mr. Gibbon says, which Dr. Priestley has struck out of his scanty creed, has been the uniform faith of the Christian church: it is the foundation of several questions concerning Mary, more curious than useful, which have been eagerly discussed; and it is implied in those honours which, from the beginning, have been paid to her, and which, in the church of Rome, have degenerated into idolatry. The conception of Jesus is the point from which we date the union between his divine

and human nature; and, this conception being miraculous, the existence of the Person in whom they are united was not physically derived from Adam. But, as Dr. Horsley speaks in his sermon on the incarnation, union with the uncreated Word is the very principle of personality and individual existence in the Son of Mary. According to this view of the matter, the miraculous conception gives a completeness and consistency to the revelation concerning Jesus Christ. Not only is he the Son of God, but, as the Son of man, he is exalted above his brethren, while he is made like them. He is preserved from the contamination adhering to the race whose nature he assumed; and when the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, was made flesh, the intercourse which, as man, he had with God is distinguished, not in degree only, but in kind, from that which any prophet ever enjoyed, and is infinitely more intimate, because it did not consist in communications occasionally made to him, but arose from the manner in which his human nature had its existence.

After the fact is admitted, that the divine and human natures were united in Jesus Christ, all speculations concerning the manner of the fact are vague and unsatisfying; all disputes upon this point instantly degenerate into a mere verbal controversy, in which the terms of human science are applied to a subject which is infinitely exalted above them, and words are multiplied very far beyond the number and clearness of the ideas entertained by those who use them. There are no disputes, even in scholastic theology, which are more frivolous, and none which, in the present state of science, appear more uninteresting, than those that respect the doctrine of the incarnation; and there is a danger that you may from thence conceive a prejudice against the importance of the doctrine itself. I mean, therefore, to lay aside all consideration of the different opinions, and to take hold of that simple proposition which the Scriptures declare, that I may show you the rank which it holds in the scheme of Christianity—the consequences which flow from it—and the influence which it sheds over other articles of our faith.

We have learned from Scripture that Jesus Christ is truly God: we have learned from Scripture that he is truly man; and therefore it is unquestionably the doctrine

of Scripture that he is both God and man. This union of the nature of God and the nature of man in his person, is called by divines the Hypostatical or Personal Union, of which it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception, and upon which the mind soon wanders when it begins to speculate; but which, with those who rest in the declarations of Scripture, is understood to mean that the same person is both God and man.

Since Jesus Christ is both God and man, it follows that each nature in him is complete, and that the two are distinct from one another. If the divine nature were incomplete, he would not be God; if the human nature were incomplete, he would not be man; and if the two natures were confounded, he would neither be truly God, nor truly man, but something arising out of the composition. In this respect the union of the soul and body of a man is a very inadequate representation of the hypostatical union. Neither the soul nor the body is by itself complete. The soul without the body has no instrument of its operations: the body without the soul is destitute of the principle of life; the two are only different parts of one complex nature. But Jesus Christ was God before he became man; and there was nothing deficient in his humanity; so that the hypostatical union is the union of two distinct natures, each of which is entire.

The hypostatical union, thus understood, is the key which opens to us a great part of the phraseology of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ. He is sometimes spoken of as God; He is sometimes spoken of as man; and things peculiar to each nature are affirmed concerning him, not as if he possessed one nature to the exclusion of the other, but because, possessing both, the characters of each may with equal propriety be ascribed to him. This is known in the Greek theological writers by the name of ἀντίδοσις ἰδιωμάτων, which the Latins have translated *communicatio proprietatum*, the communication of the properties. You will not understand them to mean by this phrase, that any thing peculiar to the divine nature was communicated to the human, or *vice versâ*; for it is impossible that the Deity can share in the weakness of humanity, and it is impossible that humanity could be exalted to a participation of any of the essential perfections of

the Godhead. Although, therefore, the Word fills heaven and earth, because by him all things consist, yet, as it is of the very nature of body to occupy a certain portion of space, the body of Christ, without losing that nature from which it derives its name, cannot, by union with the Word, become omnipresent, but during our Lord's ministry was upon earth, forty days after his resurrection ascended, *i. e.* was transferred by a local motion from earth to heaven, and is now in heaven.—I have chosen this example, because the Lutheran church, in attempting to explain the words used by our Lord in the institution of the Lord's supper, "This is my body," have conceived that ubiquity is derived to the body of Christ from its connexion with the λογος.

This error our church justly condemns. Each nature we conceive to retain its own properties, and there is said to be a communication of properties for this reason, because the properties of both natures are ascribed to the same person, in so much, that even when Jesus Christ derives his name from his divine nature, as when he is called the Son of God, things peculiar to the human nature are affirmed of him. "Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself. Yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature."*

Thus, when we read of the "church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood,"—"that God laid down his life for us,"—"that the Lord of glory was crucified,"—we do not, from such expressions, infer that God could suffer: but, taking the passages from which we had inferred the union of two natures in Christ as a guide, we consider these expressions as only transferring, in consequence of the closeness of that union, to him who is called God, because he is God, the actions and passions which belong to him because he is man. In like manner, when we read that all things were made by the Word, we do not suppose that they were made by the Word after he became flesh; and when our Lord says, "the Son of man

* Confession of Faith, viii. 7.

hath power to forgive sins," we recollect that the Person who claims this high and incommunicable prerogative of the Deity is the Word who "in the beginning was with God, and was God;" and the truth of the proposition does not appear to us to be in the least impaired by his condescending to remind us, at the very time when he claims this prerogative, that he is also the Son of man.

This mode of speaking, so frequent in Scripture, by which the properties of both God and man are applied to Jesus Christ, the properties of God even when he is called man, and the properties of man even when he is called God, has given occasion to one distinction which is used by the ancient theological writers, and to another which is used by the modern. Neither distinction is expressed in the words of Scripture: but both are warranted by the authority of Scripture; and both are employed for the same purpose, to explain several passages concerning Jesus Christ, which, without attending to such distinctions, appear to contradict the analogy of faith. The ancient distinction is thus explained by Bishop Bull,* whose words I shall nearly translate. "The whole doctrine concerning Christ was divided by the ancient doctors of the church into two parts, which they called θεολογια and οικονομια. By θεολογια they meant every thing that related to the divinity of our Saviour; his being the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, and the world's being made by him. By οικονομια they meant his incarnation, and every thing that he did in the flesh to procure the salvation of mankind. Our God Jesus Christ, says Ignatius, was born by Mary κατ' οικονομιαν Θεου. Christians, says Justin, acknowledge Christ the Son of God, who was before the morning star, and condescended to be made flesh ινα δια της οικονομιας ταυτης the serpent might be destroyed. We believe, says Irenæus, in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, και εις τας οικονομιας αυτου, by which the Son of God became man." These three primitive writers, all of whom lived before the middle of the second century, led the way to their successors in the use of the word οικονομια; and the ancient mode of explaining those passages which seemed to be inconsistent

* Judicium Ecc. Cath. cap. v. p. 45.

with the divinity of our Saviour was to refer them to the οἰκονομία.

The same thing is meant by the modern distinction, according to which some things are said to be spoken of our Saviour in his human nature, and others in his divine. It is allowed that the words divine and human nature of Christ are not found in Scripture. But it cannot be denied that he is there spoken of sometimes as God and sometimes as man, and that some propositions which would appear to be false, if he were only God, and others which would appear to be false, if he were only man, are affirmed concerning him who is both God and man. We conceive, therefore, that the Scriptures, although they do not use the words, afford us a sufficient warrant for the modern distinction: and we learn, from numberless instances in which the distinction is clearly implied, to exercise our judgment in interpreting those passages which have some degree of obscurity, according to either the divine or the human nature of Christ, as may best preserve the analogy of faith.

I shall give you a specimen of this use of the ancient and modern distinctions, by applying them to the explication of passages respecting the three following subjects, the humiliation of Jesus, his exaltation, and the termination of that kingdom which is said to have been given him.

1. The ancient and modern distinction, suggested by the doctrine of Scripture concerning the incarnation of Christ, is of use to explain the descriptions that are given of his humiliation. It is said that "Christ came down from heaven;" that he who "was rich became poor;" that "he was made a little lower than the angels;" that ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτὸν, which we render "made himself of no reputation," but which properly means emptied himself of that which he had. Now it has been asked with triumph by those who deny the original dignity of our Saviour's person, how a God could leave heaven; how it is consistent with the character of the Creator and Ruler of the universe to desert his station, and confine himself for thirty years within a human body; and how his place was supplied during this temporary relinquishment of the care of all things? The answer to these questions is derived from the distinction

of which we are speaking, *i. e.* the expressions now quoted are to be referred to the οἰκονομία. They do not imply any change upon the divine nature of Christ, which by being divine is incapable of change; they do not mean that the powers of the Godhead were impaired or suspended, but only that the exercise of them was concealed from the eyes of mortals, and that the form of God, which Jesus had before the worlds were made, was veiled by the humanity which he assumed. For, as Eusebius speaks, (see Bull, 275,) "he was not so entangled with the chains of flesh as to be confined to that place where his body was, and restrained from being in any other; but at the very time when he dwelt with men, he filled all things, he was with the Father, and he took care of all things which are in heaven and which are in earth." And all this is but a commentary upon these words of our Lord, John iii. 13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven;" who is in heaven at the very time when the body with which he has united himself is upon earth. The same distinction suggests the proper interpretation of those phrases in which our Lord speaks of himself according to the language of the prophet Isaiah, as the servant of God. "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me."* The Apostle to the Hebrews, v. 7, 8, speaks still more strongly. Now if we knew nothing more of Jesus than these passages contain, we could not hesitate to admit all that inferiority to the Supreme Being which the Arians or even the Socinians teach. But if we recollect that the attributes and names of God are elsewhere applied to him, then according to the rules of sound criticism, which teach us to adopt that interpretation by which an author is made consistent with himself, we must refer the passages containing that strong language to the οἰκονομία, and consider them as spoken of the man Jesus Christ, who at his incarnation became the minister of his Father's will, who, as man, prayed and gave

* John xiv. 31; viii. 28; vi. 38.

thanks to his God, and whose human nature admitted of learning, and suffering, and strong crying, and fear.

In the same manner we are accustomed to explain that remarkable expression of our Lord, Mark xiii. 32: "Of that day knoweth no man, no not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father." The Son of God cannot be ignorant of the day of judgment. For we read, that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" that "the Father showeth the Son all things that himself doeth;" that "no man knoweth the Father, save the Son."* We are obliged therefore to have recourse to the distinction between the divine and human nature of Christ: and as the expression, Luke ii. 52, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature," unquestionably means that the human soul which animated his body improved as his body grew, although the λογος united to the soul knew all things from the beginning, so here the Son, considered as the Son of man, by which name our Lord had spoken of himself at the 26th verse, is said to be ignorant of that which the Son of God certainly knew.

2. We avail ourselves of the same distinction to explain what is said in Scripture concerning the exaltation of Jesus. You read in numberless places of a dominion being given to Jesus, of his receiving power from the Father, of his overcoming and entering into his glory. You find the connexion between his sufferings and his exaltation stated explicitly, Heb. ii. 9, and Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10; and the words of our Lord, John v. 26, 27, appear to be to the same purpose. The inference obviously drawn from such passages is this, that Jesus Christ received from God the Father a recompense for his obedience and sufferings in procuring our salvation; that this recompense was not only the highest honour and felicity conferred on himself, but also a sovereignty over those whom he had redeemed: and that thus by his recompense there is derived to him from God a right to the worship and service of the human race.

It is so agreeable to our natural sense of justice, that eminent virtue should be crowned with an illustrious re-

* Col. ii. 3. John v. 20. Matth. xi. 27.

ward; it is so flattering to our ideas of the dignity of human nature, to behold a man raised by the excellence of his character to the government of the universe, that this inference constitutes by much the most pleasing part of the Socinian system: and as it may be stated in such a manner as to be perfectly consistent with that doctrine which you profess to teach, you will find that you cannot introduce into your sermons a more popular topic of exhortation, and of encouragement to persevering exertion in the discharge of our duty.

But pleasing and useful as this view of the exaltation of Jesus is, it plainly does not contain the whole account of the matter, for the following reasons:—1. Some of the very passages which speak of a recompense being given to Jesus, had declared, a little before, the original dignity of his person. He had been styled in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the brightness of the Father's glory;" in the Epistle to the Philippians, "he who was in the form of God;" and he had said of himself, John v. 19, "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." 2. Many passages of Scripture, by declaring that Jesus Christ created all things, teach us that before he obeyed or suffered in the flesh he possessed a clear title to universal dominion. And, 3. This original dignity of person, and this most ancient title to dominion, are of such a kind that it was impossible for them to receive any accession. He who is the image of the invisible God could not by any new state be rendered more glorious or more happy; and no gift or subsequent appointment could constitute a more perfect right, or a more complete subjection of all things to Jesus Christ, than that which arose from his being the Word by whom all things were made, and by whom they consist.

For these reasons it is manifest that, if we consider Christ only as the Son of God, his exaltation can mean nothing more than that his original title to dominion was published by the preaching of the Gospel, and universally recognised, and that to this original title to dominion there was superadded the new title of Redeemer of the world. But this is not a full explication of all the places in which his exaltation is spoken of; for the passages quoted from the

Hebrews, the Philippians, and from John, lead us to attend, in the very appointment of this dominion, to the incarnation of the Son of God. The dominion is said to be given him because he is the Son of Man—for the suffering of death,—because he humbled himself; and we are thus obliged, in explaining that dominion, to have recourse to the ancient and modern distinction which we are now applying. It is part of the οἰκονομία, which the Scriptures teach, that, as the Son of God, when he was made flesh, veiled his glory, so after his resurrection, the flesh which he had assumed was exalted to partake of that glory. All that from the beginning had appertained to the Son of God is now declared to belong to that person who is both God and man: and he is invested with the office of Ruler and Judge, in the execution of which he completes that work which he began when he was made flesh. It is not, therefore, in respect of the divine nature of Christ, which does not admit of a recompense, but in respect of his human nature, that his exaltation is stated under the notion of a reward: the scandal attending his humiliation is thereby completely removed: and the declaration of his appointment to the sovereignty of the universe is the provision which God hath made, that, notwithstanding his humiliation, "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

3. By the same distinction we are enabled to account for what is said in Scripture concerning the termination of the dominion given to Christ. The words of the Apostle Paul upon this subject, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 28, cannot mean that the dominion of Christ, which is founded on his having created all things, shall come to an end; for this must continue as long as any creature exists; neither can they mean that the gratitude and worship of those whom he redeemed by his blood, and that right to their obedience which arises from this interposition, shall ever cease; for this is an obligation which must co-exist with the souls of the redeemed. Accordingly, John heard every creature in heaven and in earth saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and

ever:"* and the kingdom of Christ is represented, both in the Old and in the New Testament, as everlasting. The meaning, therefore, of the words of the Apostle must be, that the office with which the Son of Man was invested, in order to carry into full effect the purposes of his incarnation, which divines are accustomed to call his mediatorial kingdom, shall cease when these purposes are accomplished. His authority to execute judgment must expire, after the quick and the dead have received according to their works; and he can no longer rule in the midst of his enemies, after they are all put under his feet. Every thing which the ancient theological writers meant by οἰκονομία will then be concluded: and although the Son of God never can lay aside his relation to those whom by that economy he hath brought to his Father, yet the offices implied under the character of Mediator, which had a reference to their preparation for heaven, can have no place amongst the glorified saints, but God shall be all in all, and the Son shall reign in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

In this manner, from the union between the divine and human natures of Christ, and the communication of the properties of the two natures, we are able to deduce an explication of several passages of Scripture which would otherwise appear unintelligible. There is one other use of the doctrine concerning the incarnation, which is clearly stated in Scripture, and with which I close all that relates particularly to the person of Jesus Christ.

It is by the union of two natures in one person that Christ is qualified to be the Saviour of the world. He became man, that with the greatest possible advantage to those whom he was sent to instruct, he might teach them the nature and the will of God; that his life might be their example; that by being once compassed with the infirmities of human nature he might give them assurance of his fellow-feeling; that by suffering on the cross he might make atonement for their sins; and that in his reward they might behold the earnest and the pattern of theirs.

But had Jesus been only man, or had he been one of

* Rev. v. 13.

the spirits that surround the throne of God, he could not have accomplished the work which he undertook: for the whole obedience of every creature being due to the Creator, no part of that obedience can be placed to the account of other creatures, so as to supply the defects of their service, or to rescue them from the punishment which they deserve. The Scriptures, therefore, reveal, that he who appeared upon earth as man is also God, and, as God, was mighty to save; and by this revelation they teach us that the merit of our Lord's obedience, and the efficacy of his interposition, depend upon the hypostatical union.*

All modern sects of Christians agree in admitting that the greatest benefits arise to us from the Saviour of the world being man; but the Arians and Socinians contend earnestly that his sufferings do not derive any value from his being God; and their reasoning is specious. You say, they argue, that Jesus Christ, who suffered for the sins of men, is both God and man. You must either say that God suffered, or that he did not suffer; if you say that God suffered, you do indeed affix an infinite value to the sufferings, but you affirm that the Godhead is capable of suffering, which is both impious and absurd: if you say that God did not suffer, then, although the person that suffered had both a divine and a human nature, the sufferings were merely those of a man, for, according to your own system, the two natures are distinct, and the divine is impassible.

In answer to this method of arguing, we admit that the Godhead cannot suffer, and we do not pretend to explain the kind of support which the human nature derived under its sufferings from the divine, or the manner in which the two were united. But from the uniform language of Scripture, which magnifies the love of God in giving his only begotten Son, which speaks in the highest terms of the preciousness of the blood of Christ, which represents him as coming in the body that was prepared for him, to do that which sacrifice and burnt-offering could not do— from all this we infer that there was a value, a merit, in

* Ἡνωσεν οὖν τον ανθρωπον τῳ Θεῳ.—Εδει γαρ μεσιτην Θεον τε και ανθρωπων δια της ιδιας προς ἑκατερους οικειοτητος τους φιλιαν και ὁμονοιαν του; αμφοτερους συναγαγειν. Iren. cont. Hær. lib. iii. cap. 187.

the sufferings of this person, superior to that which belonged to the sufferings of any other: and as the same Scriptures intimate in numberless places the strictest union between the divine and human natures of Christ, by applying to him promiscuously the actions which belong to each nature, we hold that it is impossible for us to separate in our imagination this peculiar value which they affix to his sufferings, from the peculiar dignity of his person.

The hypostatical union, then, is the corner-stone of our religion. We are too much accustomed, in all our researches, to perceive that things are united, without being able to investigate the bond which unites them, to feel any degree of surprise that we cannot answer all the questions which ingenious men have proposed upon this subject: but we can clearly discern, in those purposes of the incarnation of the Son of God which the Scriptures declare, the reason why they have dwelt so largely upon his divinity; and if we are careful to take into our view the whole of that description which they give of the person by whom the remedy in the Gospel was brought; if, in our speculations concerning him, we neither lose sight of the two parts which are clearly revealed, nor forget what we cannot comprehend, that union between the two parts which is necessarily implied in the revelation of them, we shall perceive, in the character of the Messiah, a completeness, and a suitableness to the design of his coming, which of themselves create a strong presumption that we have rightly interpreted the Scriptures.

CHAP. IX.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT.

I HAVE now given a view of the different opinions that have been held concerning that Person, by whom the remedy offered in the Gospel was brought to the world. But there is also revealed to us another Person, by whom that remedy is applied, who is known in Scripture by the name of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost; and whom our Lord, in different places of that long discourse which John has recorded in chap. xiv. xv. and xvi. of his Gospel, calls παρακλητος. When you read John xv. 26, you cannot avoid considering ὁ παρακλητος as the same with το πνευμα, and as a person distinct from the Father and the Son. Παρακλητος is derived from παρακαλεω, the precise meaning of which is, "standing by the side of a person I call upon him to do something," and which is commonly translated, "I comfort or encourage." Hence the word παρακλητος is rendered in our Bibles the Comforter; but if you attend to the analogy of the Greek language, you will perceive that the manner in which it is formed from the verb, suggests as the more literal interpretation of the noun *advocatus*, advocate, "one who, being called in, stands by the side of others to assist them."

Of the offices of this Person I shall have to speak, when I proceed in the progress of my plan to the application of the remedy. At present I have only to state the information which the Scriptures afford, and the different opinions to which that information has given rise, concerning the character of this Person. The subject lies within a much narrower compass than that which I have just finished.

Dr. Clarke has collected, in his Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, all the passages of the New Testament in which the Spirit is mentioned. They are very numerous; they have been differently interpreted; and corresponding

to this difference of interpretation is the variety of opinions which have been held concerning this Person. The simplest method in which I can state the progress of these opinions, is to begin with directing your attention to the form of baptism taught by our Lord, Matt. xxviii. 19. Baptism or washing is found in the religious ceremonies of all nations. Among the heathen, the initiated after having been instructed in certain hidden doctrines and awful rites, were baptized into these mysteries. The Israelites are said by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. x. 2, to have been baptized into Moses, at the time when they followed him as the servant of God, sent to lead them through the Red Sea.

Proselytes to the law of Moses from other nations were received by baptism; and all the people who went out to hear John, the forerunner of Jesus, were baptized by him into the baptism of repentance. In accommodation to this general practice, Jesus, having employed his apostles to baptize those who came to him during his ministry, sent them forth, after his ascension, to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. But, in order to render baptism a distinguishing rite, by which his followers might be separated from the followers of any other teacher who chose to baptize, he added these words, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The earliest Christian writers inform us that this solemn form of expression was uniformly employed from the beginning of the Christian church. It is true, indeed, that the Apostle Peter said to those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ;" and that, in different places of the book of Acts, it is said that persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: and from hence those who deny the argument, which I am about to draw from the form of baptism, have inferred that, in the days of the apostles, this form was not rigorously observed. But a little attention will satisfy you that the inference does not follow, because there is internal evidence from the New Testament itself, that when the historian says persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, he means they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Jesus. Thus the question put by

Paul, Acts xix. 2, 3, shows that he did not suppose it possible for any person who administered Christian baptism to omit the mention of the Holy Ghost; and even after this question, the historian, when he informs us that the disciples were baptized, is not solicitous to repeat the whole form, but says in his usual manner, Acts xix. 5, "when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." There is another question put by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. i. 13, which shows us in what light he viewed the form of baptism. The question implies his considering the form of baptism as so sacred, that the introducing the name of a teacher into it was the same thing as introducing a new master into the kingdom of Christ.

There is nothing, then, in the New Testament contrary to the clear information which we derive from the succession of Christian writers, who agree in declaring that the form of baptism originally prescribed by Jesus was from the beginning observed upon every occasion. At a time when Christianity was not the established religion of the state, but was spreading rapidly through the Roman empire, many were daily baptized who had been educated in the knowledge and belief of other religions, and baptism was their initiation into the faith of Christ. In order to prepare them for this solemn act, they received instruction for many days in the principal articles of the Christian faith, particularly in the knowledge of the three Persons into whose name they were to be baptized, and they were required at their baptism to declare that they believed what they had been taught. The practice of connecting instruction with the administration of baptism rests upon apostolical authority;* and upon this was probably founded the following practice, which we learn from early writers to have been universal. Those who were to be baptized underwent a preparation, during which they were called, in the Greek church, κατηχουμενοι; in the Latin church, *competentes*. Κατηχουμενοι is derived from κατηχεω, a compound of κατα and ηχεω, *sono*, which implies that they were instructed *vivâ voce* by catechists, whose business it was to deliver to them in the most familiar

* Acts viii. 35—38. Rom. x. 10. 1 Pet. iii. 21.

manner the rudiments of the doctrine of Christ: *Competentes*, competitors, or candidates, implies that they were seeking together the honour of being initiated into Christianity. When the catechumens or competentes were judged to have attained a sufficient measure of knowledge, they were brought to the baptismal font, and immediately before their baptism two things were required of them. The one was called αποταξις του Σατανα, *segregatio a Satana*; the other, συνταξις προς Χριστον, *aggregatio ad Christum*. By the one they renounced, in a form of words that was prescribed to them, the devil, his works, his worship, and all his pomp, *i. e.* they professed their resolution to forsake both vice and idolatry: by the other, they declared their faith in those articles in which they had been instructed. The most ancient method of declaring this faith was taken from the form of baptism. The person to be baptized said, "I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." By these words he professed that his faith embraced that whole name into which he was to be baptized; and the creeds, which came to be used in different churches, appear to have been only enlargements of this original declaration, the substance of which was retained in all of them, but was extended or explained by insertions which were meant to oppose errors in doctrine as they sprang up, and which consequently varied in every church according to the nature of the errors that prevailed there, and the light in which these errors were viewed. Every church required its catechumens to repeat its own creed before they were baptized, so that the repetition of the creed was a declaration, on the part of the catechumens, that their faith in the name into which they were to be baptized was the same with that of the church from which they were to receive baptism.

It appears by this deduction that faith in the Holy Ghost was a branch of the rudiments of Christianity, derived from that form by which our Lord appointed disciples to be initiated into his religion: and in this form you observe that the Holy Ghost is conjoined with the Father and the Son, in such a manner as obviously to imply that he is a person of equal rank with them. When you recollect the exalted conceptions which the Gospel gives of the Father, and the full revelation which it has made of the

dignity of the Son; when you recollect that there is authority in the New Testament for worshipping the Son as well as the Father; and when you consider farther that the persons who professed their faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, did at the very same time renounce the worship of idols, you will acknowledge that there is an unaccountable ambiguity in the expression prescribed by our Lord; nay that the form used upon his authority has a necessary tendency to lead Christians into the practice of idolatry which they then renounced, unless the Holy Ghost be, with the Father and the Son, an object of worship. This clear inference from the form of baptism was probably confirmed in the earliest ages by its being observed, that, besides all those places of the New Testament which teach us to reverence the Spirit, there is one passage where the Apostle Paul has joined the three Persons together in such a manner as seems intended to convey to his readers a conception of the equality of their rank.* "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."

Upon these authorities the Christian church, from the very beginning, worshipped the Holy Ghost. There is clear evidence of this fact, in a passage from Justin Martyr,† whom we are accustomed to quote as the best voucher of the opinions and the practices of early times. The succession of Christian writers from Justin say the same thing, and the Spirit is conjoined with the Father and the Son in the most ancient doxologies. But it was a principle with the first Christians, *τον Θεον μονον δει προσκυνειν.* The worship of any creature was in their eyes idolatry; and therefore their worshipping the Holy Ghost was expressing by their practice the same inference which they draw in their writings from the form of baptism, viz. that the Holy Ghost is a person of the same rank with the Father and the Son.

If this uniform testimony of the Christian writers could

* 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

† Αλλ' εκεινον τε (πατερα) και τον παρ' αυτου υἱον ελθοντα, και διδαξαντα ἡμας ταυτα και τον των αλλων ἑπομενων και ἐξομοιουμενων αγαθων αγγελων στρατον, πνευμα τε το προφητικον σεβομεθα και προσκυνουμεν, λογῳ και αληθειᾳ τιμωντες. See Bull. Def. 70.

be supposed to require any support, we might quote a dialogue entitled Philopatris, commonly ascribed to Lucian, and certainly written either by him, or by some contemporary of his, about the middle of the second century. The author means to give a ludicrous representation of the manner in which the catechumens were instructed, and amongst other circumstances, he introduces the following.* The scholar asks by whom he should swear, and the Christian instructor answers in words which imply that the Christians, in the days of Lucian, were accustomed to swear by all the three Persons mentioned. But as swearing by a person is one of those honours which are most properly called divine, Lucian infers from this part of the practice of the Christians, that in their estimation every one of the three Persons was Ζευς και Θεος; and thus his testimony comes to be a voucher of both the opinions and the practice of the great body of Christians with regard to the Holy Ghost.

During the first three centuries, there was not any particular controversy upon this subject, except that which was occasioned by the system of the Gnostics. The numerous sects that come under this description, who corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel by a mixture of the tenets of oriental philosophy, held both Christ and the Spirit to be Æons, emanations from the Supreme Mind. But as they denied the divine original of the books of Moses, they said that the Spirit, which had inspired him and the prophets, was not that exalted Æon whom God sent forth after the ascension of Christ, but an Æon very much inferior, and removed at a great distance from the Supreme Being. It was, on the other hand, the general belief of the Christian church, that the same Spirit who was afterwards sent to the apostles had operated in the saints from the beginning; and the character uniformly given of the Spirit by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and the other primitive writers, was in such words as these: το προφητικον πνευμα—το δια των προφητων κεκηρυχος τας οικονομιας Θεου. In order, therefore, to oppose the errors of the Gnostics, there came to be introduced into the creed of the church of Jerusalem, which was honoured throughout the east as the mother of all the

* See Bull, Def. F. N. 73, and Jud. 32.

the received creed concerning the Spirit: and the opinion which he adopted upon this subject was the same with that refined system which has been ascribed by some to Macedonius. Socinus did not say that the Holy Ghost is a creature; he said that it is the power and energy of God sent from heaven to men; that by its being given without measure, as the Scriptures speak, to Jesus Christ, this great Prophet was sanctified, and led, and raised above all the other messengers of heaven; that by the extraordinary measure in which it was given to his apostles they were qualified for executing their commission; and that it is still communicated in such manner and such degree as is necessary for the comfort and sanctification of the disciples of Jesus.

This is the system of the modern Socinians, which Lardner has brought forward in some pieces that are published in the tenth and eleventh volumes of his works, and which is found often recurring in the writings of Priestley and Lindsey. The arguments upon which this system rests are of the following kind. An attempt is made to reconcile with this system all those passages of Scripture which seem to imply that the Holy Ghost is a distinct person: it is said that the Spirit of God sometimes denotes the power or wisdom of God, as they are communicated to men, *i.e.* spiritual gifts; that it is sometimes merely a circumlocution for God himself; and that when the Spirit of God appears to be spoken of as a person, we are to understand that there is a figure of speech, the same kind of prosopopœia by which it is said that charity is kind and envieth not—that sin deceives and slays us—and that the law speaks. It is allowed that the figure is variously used in different places: but it is alleged, that, by a moderate exercise of critical sagacity, all those passages of the New Testament, in which the Spirit of God is mentioned, may be explained without our being obliged to suppose that a person is denoted by that expression.

This is the Socinian mode of arguing with regard to the Holy Ghost. Upon the other side, it is argued by Bishop Pearson, who has treated the subject very fully and distnictly in his Exposition of the Creed; by Dr. Barrow, in one of his Sermons on the Creed; by Bishop Burnet, on the Thirty-nine Articles, and by others, that numberless

actions and operations which unavoidably convey the idea of a person are ascribed to the Holy Ghost—that there are many places in which neither prosopopœia nor any other figure of speech can account for this manner of speaking—and that the attributes, and names, and description of this person, are such as clearly imply that he is no creature, but truly God.

The subject, it may be seen, from this general account of the argument upon both sides, runs out into a long detail of minute criticism. Without attempting to enter into this, I will only suggest four general observations, which it is proper to carry along with you when you examine those passages which Dr. Clarke has fairly collected in his Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, and upon which the other writers argue.

1. In many places of Scripture "the Spirit of God" may be a circumlocution for God himself, or for the power and wisdom of God. Thus when we read, "whither shall I go from thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—"they vexed his holy Spirit,"—"by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens;" or when Jesus says, "if I by the Spirit of God;" in another Gospel it is, "if I by the finger of God cast out devils," it is not more reasonable to infer from these expressions that the Spirit of God is a person distinct from God, than it would be to suppose that, when we speak of the spirit of a man, we mean a person distinct from the man himself. You will not think that because the circumlocution, for which the Socinians contend, does not give the true explication of all the passages to which they wish to apply it, there is no instance of its being used in Scripture: and you will always carry along with you this general rule of Scripture criticism, that it is most unbecoming those, who profess to derive all their knowledge of theology from the Scriptures, to strain texts in order to make them appear to support particular doctrines, and that there never can be any danger to truth, in adopting that interpretation of Scripture which is the most natural and rational.

2. There are many passages in which "the Spirit of God" means gifts or powers communicated to men, and from which we are not warranted to infer that there is a person who is the fountain and distributer of these gifts.

churches, in addition to the original words, "*I believe εις το αγιον πνευμα*," the following, "*το παρακλητον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων.*" We know that Cyril, who was bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century, wrote an exposition of the creed of which these words are a part; and we learn from his writings, that this creed was explained to the catechumens in the church of Jerusalem, and that they were required to repeat it before they received baptism.

Here the matter rested till after the time of the Arian controversy. As Arius held the Son to be the most excellent creature of God, by whom all others were created, the Spirit was necessarily ranked by him amongst the productions of the Son: and accordingly the ancient writers who have left an account of the heresy of Arius, say that he made the Spirit *κτισμα κτισματος*, the creature of a creature. But as his attacks were chiefly directed against the divinity of the Son, and as his opinions concerning the Spirit were only an inference from the leading principles of his system, they did not draw any particular attention in the council of Nice. This first general council, which met A.D. 325, published the creed, which is known by the name of the Nicene creed, in direct opposition to the errors of Arius. Accordingly, there are added in this creed to the second article of the ancient creeds, that concerning the Son, several clauses which were meant to declare the dignity of his person, and his consubstantiality with the Father; but the third article, that concerning the Spirit, is continued in the same simple mode of expression which had been originally suggested by the form of baptism *και εις το πνευμα το αγιον.*

In the course of the fourth century, Macedonius, who held a particular modification of the Arian system concerning the Son, following out the principles of that system, openly denied the divinity of the Spirit, and was the founder of a sect, known in those times by the name *Πνευματομαχοι*. Macedonius is said by some to have denied that the Holy Ghost is a person distinct from the Father, and to have considered what the Scriptures call the Spirit as only a divine energy diffused throughout the creation. According to others, he held the Spirit to be a creature, the servant of the Most High God. We are not acquainted with the detail of his opinions. We only know

in general, that he did not admit, what in his time had been generally received in the Christian church, that the Holy Spirit is a person of the same divine nature with the Father and the Son; and we have, the clearest evidence that the opinion of Macedonius appeared to the church to be an innovation in the ancient faith. For as the first general council, the council of Nice, had, A. D. 325, condemned the opinions of Arius with regard to the Son, so the second general council, the council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, condemned the opinions of Macedonius with regard to the Spirit. The council of Nice testified their disapprobation of the opinions of Arius, and guarded those who should be received into the Christian church against his errors, by the additions which they made to the second article of the ancient creeds; and the council of Constantinople in like manner entered their testimony against the errors of Macedonius by the following change upon that creed which had been used in the church of Jerusalem, and which appears to have been the same in substance with that used throughout the Christian world. The third article of the ancient creed had run thus, εις το αγιον πνευμα, το παρακλητον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων. Instead of το παρακλητον, which might be conceived to convey a notice of inferiority and ministration in the Holy Ghost, the council of Constantinople introduced the following expressions: Και εις το πνευμα το αγιον, το κυριον το ζωοποιουν, το εκ του πατρος εκπορευομενον, το συν πατρι και υἱῳ προσκυνουμενον και συνδοξαζομενον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων.

The expressions inserted instead of το παρακλητον were intended to declare, what the natural import of the words very strongly conveys, that majesty of character in the Holy Ghost, and that equality with the Father and the Son in worship and glory, which those who are admitted to Christian baptism after being catechumens had been taught, in the application of the original form, to believe, and which it does not appear that the great body of the church, till the time of Macedonius, had ever thought of questioning.

When, in the sixteenth century, opinions concerning the Son, much bolder than those which had been held by Arius, or any of his followers, were avowed and published by Socinus, it was not possible that he could acquiesce in

So we read often in the Old Testament, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon him," when nothing more is necessarily implied under the expression, than that the person spoken of was endowed with an extraordinary degree of skill, or might, or wisdom. So the promises of the Old Testament, "I will pour out my Spirit upon you," were fulfilled under the New Testament by what are there called "the gifts of the Holy Ghost;" in reference to which we read, "that Christians received the Holy Ghost,"—"that the Holy Ghost was given to them,"—"that they were filled with the Spirit." Neither the words of the promise, nor the words that relate the fulfilment of it, suggest the personality of the Spirit; and if we knew nothing more than what such passages suggest, the Socinian system upon this subject would exhaust the meaning of Scripture, and the Spirit would appear to be merely a virtue or energy proceeding from God.

3. But my third observation is, that if there are passages in which the Holy Ghost is clearly and unequivocally described as a person, then, however numerous the passages may be in which "the Spirit of God" appears to be a phrase meaning gifts and powers communicated to men, this does not in the least invalidate the evidence of the personality of the Spirit, because it is a most natural and intelligible figure to express the gifts and powers by the name of that person who is represented as the distributer of them. The true method, then, of stating the question upon this subject between the Socinians and other Christians, is not, whether it be possible to interpret a great number of passages that speak of the Spirit of God, without being obliged to suppose that there is a distinct Person to whom this name is given, but whether there are not some passages by which the personality of the Spirit may be clearly ascertained.

There are two passages of this last kind to which I would direct your attention. The first is the long discourse of our Lord, in chap. xiv. xv. and xvi. of John's Gospel, where, in promising the Holy Ghost to the apostles, he describes him as a person who was to be sent and to come, who hears, and speaks, and reproves, and instructs; as a person different from Jesus, because he was to come after Jesus departed, because he was to be sent by Christ,

and to receive of Christ, and to glorify Christ; as a person different from the Father, because he was to be sent by the Father, and because he was not to speak of himself, but to speak what he should hear. The second passage is a discourse of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 1—13, where the apostle, in speaking of the diversities of spiritual gifts, represents them as under the administration of one Spirit. It is impossible to conceive words which can mark more strongly than the 11th verse does, that there is a Person who is the author of all spiritual gifts, and who distributes them according to his discretion.

You will meet, in the collection of texts upon this subject, with many other passages which show that the apostles considered the Spirit as a person: and to the inference obviously suggested by all these passages you are to add this general consideration, that as the prosopopœia, to which the Socinians have recourse in order to evade the evidence of the personality of the Spirit, appears to be forced and unnatural, when it is applied to the long discourse recorded by John, so the supposition of any such prosopopœia being there intended is rendered incredible by our Lord's introducing, after that discourse, the Holy Ghost into the form of baptism, and thus conjoining the Holy Ghost, whom he had described as a person, with the Father and the Son, who are certainly known to be persons. There is, in all this, a continued train of argument, so much fitted to impress our minds with a conviction of the personality of the Spirit, that, if the Socinian system on this subject be true, it will be hard to fix upon any inference from the language of Scripture in which our minds may safely acquiesce.

4. My fourth observation is, that, if the Spirit of God be a person, it follows of course that he is God. I do not say that the Spirit is anywhere in Scripture directly called God: and although the writers on this subject have repeatedly said that this name is given him by implication, because, Acts v. 3, 4, lying to the Holy Ghost is stated as the same with lying to God; and our bodies are called, 1 Cor. vi. 19, the temple of the Holy Ghost, and 1 Cor. iii. 16, the temple of God, yet I would not rest so important an article of faith upon this kind of verbal criticism. The clear proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost may in my

opinion be thus shortly stated. Since all spiritual gifts are represented as being placed under the administration of this person; since blasphemy against him is declared to be an unpardonable sin; since our Lord commands Christians to be baptized into the name of this person as well as into the name of the Father and the Son; and since the apostle Paul prays or wishes for the communion of the Holy Ghost as for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, it is plain that the Scriptures teach us to honour and worship this person as we honour the Father and the Son; and it is not to be supposed that, if he bore to these two persons the relation of a creature to the Creator, we should be in this manner led to consider all the three as of the same nature.

So much force is there in this argument, that the supposition of the Spirit's being a creature has long been abandoned. It has not even that support which the Socinian opinion concerning Jesus Christ appears to derive from the expressions relating to his humanity. The Spirit is nowhere spoken of in those humble terms which belong to the man Christ Jesus: and they who are not disposed to admit his divinity, finding no warrant for affixing to him any lower character, are obliged to deny his existence, by resolving all that is said of him into a figure of speech.

Your business, therefore, in studying the controversy concerning the Spirit, is to examine whether this figure of speech, which is natural in some passages, can be admitted as the explication of all; or whether the impropriety of attempting to introduce it into some places where the Spirit is described be not so glaring, as to leave a conviction upon the mind of every candid inquirer, that the Scriptures reveal to us a third person, whose agency is exerted in accomplishing the purposes of the Gospel: and if your minds are satisfied of the personality of the Spirit, you have next to examine whether the descriptions of this person, being incompatible with the notion of that inferiority of character which belongs to a creature, do not lead you to consider him as truly and properly God.

CHAP. X.

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

FROM the information which is given us concerning the two persons whom the Gospel reveals, it appears to follow that both the Son and the Holy Ghost are truly and essentially God. But this communication of the attributes, the names, and the honours which belong to God the Father, implies that these two persons have an intimate connexion with him, and with one another: and we are thus led, after considering the two persons singly, to attend to the manner in which they are united with the Father. For when reason is able to deduce from Scripture that there are three persons, each of whom is God, that curiosity, which is inseparable from the exercise of our powers, renders her solicitous to investigate the connexion that subsists amongst the three: and it is not till after she has made many unsuccessful attempts, that she is forced to acquiesce in a consciousness of her inability to form a clear apprehension of the subject.

I am now therefore to subjoin, to the Scripture account of the Son and the Holy Ghost, a view of the opinions that have been held concerning the manner in which they are united with the Father; a subject which is known in theology by the name of the Doctrine of the Trinity. In stating these opinions, I shall not recite a great deal that I have read without being able to penetrate its meaning; nor shall I attempt to go minutely through all the shades of difference that may be traced; but I shall produce the fruit which I gathered from a wearisome perusal of many authors, by marking the great outlines of the three systems upon this subject, which stand forth most clearly distin-

guished from one another. I shall give them the names of the Sabellian, the Arian, and the Catholic systems. I call the third the Catholic system, because it is the opinion concerning the Trinity which has generally obtained in the Christian Church.

SECTION I.

THE point, from which a simple distinct exposition of opinions concerning the Trinity sets out, is that fundamental doctrine of natural religion, the unity of God. Although the heathens multiplied gods, yet, even in their popular mythology, a wide distinction was made between the subordinate deities and that Supreme Being from whom they were derived, and by whom they were controlled: and the more enlightened that the mind of any philosopher became, he rose the nearer to an apprehension of the divine unity. Our notions of the perfection of the divine nature involve the idea of unity; and that nice analogy of parts, which a skilful observer discovers in the works of nature and Providence, is an experimental confirmation of all the reasonings upon which this idea is founded. The law of Moses, which separated the Jews from the worship of the gods of the nations, declares that there is none other besides him, and asserts his unity in these words, Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Our Saviour, Mark xii. 32, adopts the unity of God as the principle of the first and great commandment of his religion. In another place, Mark x. 18, he disclaims the appellation of good, saying, "there is none good but one, that is God." The divine unity is asserted in the strongest terms by his apostles, "To us there is but one God, the only wise God, who only hath immortality."* It is said, that those who were converted "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;"† and we cannot read the New Testament without being strongly impressed with this truth, that the supposition of a number of gods, which

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. 1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16. † 1 Thess. i. 9.

philosophy and Judaism discard, is most repugnant to the perfect revelation made by Him who came from the bosom of the Father, to declare God to man.

If there be truth in this first principle of natural religion, so earnestly inculcated by the general strain of the New Testament, then the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost cannot be three Gods, but there must be a sense in which these three Persons are one God. Our Lord has been generally understood to intimate that there is such a sense, when he says, John x. 38, "I and my Father are one;" and his apostle says the same thing with regard to all the three, 1 John v. 7. It is proper, however, that you should be aware of the objections that have been made to this application of these two texts. With regard to the first, it has been said that the words of our Lord do not necessarily imply that unity of which we are speaking, and that, whether we consider the context, or the similar expressions which he uses in the seventeenth chapter of John, his words may mean no more than this, I and my Father are one in purpose, *i. e.* his power, which none can resist, is always exerted in carrying into effect my gracious designs towards my disciples. With regard to the second text, it has been said that the whole verse is an interpolation, because it is wanting in many Greek manuscripts, and because it is not quoted by any Christian father who wrote in Greek before the Council of Nice. The authenticity of this verse is certainly problematical, for very able judges have formed different opinions concerning it. Mill, the celebrated editor of the New Testament, in the beginning of the last century, after stating at great length the arguments upon both sides, gives it as his judgment, that the verse is genuine. But Griesbach, the latest editor of the New Testament, after a long investigation, declares in the most decided manner that the strongest testimonies and arguments are against this verse; and that, if it is admitted upon the slight grounds which have been alleged in defence of it, *Textus Novi Testamenti universus plane incertus esset atque dubius.* This was also the opinion of Porson, the late celebrated Greek Professor in England, and of Herbert Marsh, the Editor of Michaelis. I must accede to such authorities—and I have further to say, that even although we should admit this verse, we cannot po-

sitively affirm that it teaches an unity of nature in three persons; for it may mean nothing more than an agreement in that record, which all the three are there said to bear.

It is not, then, upon this controverted verse in John's Epistle, nor upon the probability, however strong, that the emphatical words of our Lord, "I and my Father are one," mean something more than an unity of purpose, that the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ought to be rested; but it is upon the following clear induction. The Scriptures, in conformity with right reason, declare that there is one God: at the same time, they lead us to consider every one of the three Persons as truly God. But the one of these propositions must be employed to qualify the other; and therefore there certainly is some sense in which these three persons are one God. This induction is confirmed by the language of the New Testament, which never speaks of three Gods, but uniformly mentions these three persons in such a manner as to suggest an union of counsel and operation infinitely more perfect than any which we behold.

The force of the induction which I have now stated has been felt in all ages of the church. The earliest Christian writers, who paid the same honours to the Son and to the Holy Ghost as to the Father, declared their abhorrence of polytheism, and considered themselves as worshippers of the one true God. In the second century the word τριας, *trinitas*, was imported from the Platonic school, to express the union of the three persons; and the whole succession of the Ante-Nicene fathers, although their illustrations are not always the most pertinent, discover by innumerable passages that they worshipped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as constituting what Tertullian calls, in the second century, *Trinitas unius divinitatis*, and Cyprian, in the third, *Adunata Trinitas*, and Athanasius, in the fourth, αδιαιρετος τριας.

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SECTION II.

THE first attempt, in the way of speculation, to reconcile with the unity of the Godhead what Christians had learnt to call the Trinity, was made in the second century by Praxeas, and was continued, in the beginning of the third century, by Noetus, and in the middle of it by Sabellius. —There may be some shades of difference in the opinions of these three men: but as the leading parts of their system were the same, the names of Praxeas and Noetus came to be lost in the name of Sabellius, and the points common to all the three constitute that system of the Trinity which is known by the name of Sabellianism. According to this system, God is one Person, who, at his pleasure, presents to mortals the different aspects of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In respect of his creating and preserving all things, he is the Father; in respect of what he did as the Redeemer of men, he is the Son; and in respect of those influences which he exerts in their sanctification, he is the Holy Ghost. The accounts which ancient writers give of the opinions of Sabellius lead us to think that he considered the distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as merely nominal, calling God τριωνυμος. But several circumstances, collected by the acute and industrious Mosheim, render it probable that Sabellius conceived a ray or portion emitted from the divine substance to have been joined to the man Jesus Christ, in order to form the Son; so that his opinion concerning the Person of Christ coincided with that of the Gnostics, who considered Jesus Christ as a man to whom an emanation of the Supreme Mind was united, and with that of the modern Socinians, who consider the power and wisdom of God as dwelling in the man Christ Jesus. But even after this refinement upon the opinions of Praxeas and Noetus, God continued to be stated in this system as one person, who assumes different names from the different aspects, which himself or a part of himself presents: and the true character of Sabellianism is this, that it destroys the distinction

of persons which the Scriptures teach, confounding the sender with the person sent, him that begat with him that is begotten, and the Holy Ghost with the Father, from whom he is said to proceed. Tertullian who wrote against Praxeas in the second century, and the writers of the third who opposed Sabellius, urge with great strength of argument the various passages in which this distinction is expressed or implied: and that they might place in the most odious light the doctrine by which it was confounded, they gave to Sabellius and his followers the name of Patropassians, meaning to represent it as a consequence of their doctrine, that the God and Father of all had endured those sufferings which the Scriptures ascribe to Jesus Christ.

Sabellianism preserves in the most perfect manner the unity of God; and on this account it may appear to be the most philosophical scheme of the Trinity. But insuperable objections to it arise from the language and views introduced into the New Testament. Those who wrote after this system was first published were so sensible of the force of these objections, that they discover an extreme solicitude to express clearly the distinction between the Father and the Son. They were sometimes led by this solicitude into modes of speaking, which have been represented as inconsistent with a belief of the divinity of the Son: and the great controversy which was agitated about a hundred years ago, with regard to the opinion of the Ante-Nicene fathers concerning the person of the Son, took its rise from this circumstance, that there being in their times some who denied the divinity of our Saviour, and others who denied the distinction of persons in the Godhead, these fathers wrote against both, and, from their zeal for the truth, or from the eagerness of controversy, used expressions in attacking the one of those heresies, which it is not easy to reconcile with the expressions used against the opposite heresy.

The language employed by some of the ancient writers in condemning Sabellianism encouraged Arius, about the beginning of the fourth century, to avoid every appearance of confounding the person of the Father and the Son, by broaching an opinion which his contemporaries represent as an innovation, till that time unheard of. He said that the Son was a creature who had no existence till he

was made by God out of nothing—that his being begotten means nothing more than his being made by the will of the Father—and that this peculiar term is applied to him, because he was made before all other creatures, that he might be the instrument of the Almighty in creating them. By this system Arius steered clear of Sabellianism, and at the same time he preserved the unity of God. For Jesus Christ, according to him, is in reality a creature, and only called God upon account of the offices in which he was employed, and the honour and dignity with which he was invested by the Father Almighty. To Arius, therefore, there was but one God, in the proper sense of that word: but as he admitted that Jesus Christ, a different person from the Father, was also God, because he was constituted God, his opinion must be stated as one of the ancient systems of the Trinity.

I have formerly explained,* at great length, the grounds upon which this opinion of Arius concerning the Son was rejected by the Christian church. At present I have to advert to the meaning of those terms in which the council of Nice, A. D. 325, expressed their condemnation of this opinion. The council, who knew the sense in which Arius applied the words God, and only begotten Son of God, to Jesus Christ, wished to frame such a creed as could not be repeated by those who held the Arian opinions: and with this view they made a large addition to the second article of the ancient creed, and annexed to the creed a condemnatory clause.†

* Book iii. ch. I.

† Και εις τον ενα Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον, τον υἱον του Θεου, γεννηθεντα εκ του πατρος μονογενη, τουτεστιν εκ της ουσιας του πατρος. Θεον εκ Θεου, φως εκ φωτος, Θεον αληθινον εκ Θεου αληθινου, γεννηθεντα ου ποιηθεντα, ὁμοουσιον τω πατρι, δι' ου τα παντα εγενετο. κ. τ. λ. τους δε λεγοντας, ην ποτε, ὁτε ουκ ην, και πριν γεννηθηναι, ουκ ην, και ὁτι εξ ουκ οντων εγενετο, η εξ ἑτερας ὑποστασεως η ουσιας φασκοντας ειναι, η κτιστον, η τρεπτον, η αλλοιωτον τον υἱον του Θεου, τουτους αναθεματιζει ἡ καθολικη και αποστολικη εκκλησια. The second clause is thus translated by the church of England, in that creed which they call the Nicene Creed, and which forms part of the communion service. "And in one Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlps, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made," &c. &c. The anathematizing clause is not adopted by the Church of England.

The word, in this addition, which requires the most particular attention, upon account of its frequent use in the controversy concerning the Trinity, is ὁμοουσιος. It is compounded of ὁμος, *idem*, and ουσια, *substantia*; denoting that which is of the same substance or essence with another. It had been used by classical Greek writers in this sense. So Aristotle says, ὁμοουσια παντα αστρα. It had been applied.* by Christian writers long before the council of Nice, in the very sense in which it was used by the council: and it only expresses the amount of those images which had been employed by the succession of writers from the earliest times, to mark the relation between the Father and the Son, one of the most common and significant of which is introduced into the creed itself φως εκ φωτος. As a derived light is the same in nature with the original light at which it was kindled, so, whatever be the meaning of φως when applied to the Father, the word must have the same meaning when the Son is called φως εκ φωτος.

There is a circumstance respecting the ancient use of the word ὁμοουσιος, which it is proper to state, because it creates some embarrassment, and has been the subject of satire and ridicule. This word, which the council of Nice introduced into their creed, had been prohibited by a council which met sixty years before at Antioch; and this inconsistency between two early councils has been stated in a light very unfavourable to the uniformity of the Christian faith. But the true account of the matter appears to be this. At the time of the council at Antioch, the controversy was with the Sabellians, who denied the distinction of persons between the Father and the Son. The Sabellians, employing every method to fix an odium upon the doctrine generally held concerning the Son, represented the word ὁμοουσιος, which Christians often used, as implying that there was a substance anterior to the Father and the Son, of which each received a part. The council of Antioch judged that the easiest way of repelling this attack of the Sabellians, was by laying aside the use of ὁμοουσιος: and although they did not mean to acknowledge that those who had used the word held the doctrine said

* Bull, D. F. N. 28.

by the Sabellians to be couched under it, they effectually disowned that doctrine, by recommending that other terms should be employed for expressing the Catholic opinion. At the time of the Council of Nice Sabellianism was less an object of attention. The impossibility of reconciling that system with the language of Scripture had been completely exposed; the sense of the church with regard to the distinction of the Father and the Son had been precisely expressed; there was little danger of any misapprehension of terms upon this subject; and a new adversary, who held opinions directly opposite to those of Sabellius, but whose system was conceived to be not less inconsistent with Scripture, by agreeing with the church in the expression which had been introduced into former creeds concerning the Son, seemed to demand some unequivocal declaration of the common faith. The council of Nice, therefore, whose faith we have the best reason for thinking was the same with that of the council of Antioch, revived the word ὁμοούσιος, not in the Sabellian sense, upon account of which the council of Antioch had laid it aside, but in the sense in which it had been used by more ancient writers, and in which it was perfectly agreeable to the general train of their doctrine: and the reason of the council's adopting this particular phrase was this, that no other could be found so diametrically opposite to the Arian system. For although the Arians might call Jesus God, meaning that he was constituted God, and might say that he was begotten of the Father, meaning by begotten created, yet as they held that he was made ἐξ ουκ οντων, they could not say that he was ἐκ της ουσιας πατρος; and as they said that he was ἐκ της ἑτερας ουσιας, being a creature in respect of the Creator, they could not say that he was ὁμοούσιος. Eusebius, the patron of the Arians, declared in a letter to the council of Nice, that this word was incompatible with their tenets; and for this very reason we are told it was adopted by the council, that according to an expression of Ambrose, which has been often quoted, "with the sword which the heresy itself had drawn from the scabbard, they might cut off the head of the monster."

Whether it would have been more prudent to have avoided a term which a great body of Christians declared they could not use, and to have introduced into the creed

only those general Scripture phrases in which the Arians were ready to join with the Catholics, is a point to be decided by some of the general principles of church government. At present, in explaining the terms that have been introduced into the controversy concerning the Trinity, we have only to observe, that an aversion to the word ὁμοουσιος is the mark which distinguishes all those who hold any modification of the Arian system. Some of the followers of Arius, wishing to avoid the harshness of calling so exalted a Being a creature, said that the Son was different from all other creatures, but still they were obliged by their principles to say that he was ανομοιος τῳ πατρι. Others who received the name of Semi-Arians, substituted ὁμοιουσιος in place of ὁμοουσιος, *i. e.* they admitted that the Son was not only unlike all other creatures, but that he was like the Father, having this peculiar privilege granted to him, to have a substance in all things similar to that of God. The Semi-Arians spoke in the highest terms of the dignity of the Son; and it was not easy for those who approached so near to one another as the Catholics and they did, to preserve, upon an incomprehensible subject, a marked difference in their writings. But the Semi-Arians never admitted the word ὁμοουσιος into their creeds, because it implied more than they believed. They believed that the Father had granted to the Son a similarity to himself; but ὁμοουσιος implies that there is an essential sameness of nature between them.

We are thus led, by the explication of this discriminating term, to what I called the third or Catholic System of the Trinity, which may be shortly expressed in words of common use with the Ancient Church, μια ουσια τρεις ὑποστασεις, or, εἱς Θεος εν τρισιν ὑποστασεσι.

SECTION III.

The ecclesiastical sense of the word ὑποστασις was not perfectly ascertained in the beginning of the fourth century. By some it was considered as denoting the being or subsistence of a thing, and so as equivalent to ουσια: by others

it was understood to mean that which has a subsistence, the thing subsisting, a person. It appears to be used in the first sense by the council of Nice, when in one part of the anathematizing clause they condemn those who said that the Son ἐξ ἑτερας ουσιας η ὑποστασεως ειναι; and according to this sense the council of Sardis, in the fourth entury, declared μιαν ειναι ὑποστασιν του πατρος και του υἱου και του ἁγιου πνευματος. Had the council meant by ὑποστασις a person, their decree would have been pure Sabellianism. Some alarm was spread through the church when the decree was first published, from an apprehension that this might be the meaning of it. But when the matter came to be investigated, it was found that, as the council of Sardis understood ὑποστασις in the first sense, and those who said τρεις ειναι ὑποστασεις, understood it in the second, the meaning of both was precisely the same; and after this explication, it was generally understood that ουσια should denote the being or essence of a thing, ὑποστασις the person subsisting. In this sense the last word had been used by the Platonic school and by many of the Christian writers, before the council of Nice. It is explained in the ancient Greek lexicons by πρωσωπον, and it was rendered by the Latins *persona*, a living intelligent agent.

The third system, then, was distinguished from Sabellianism by admitting τρεις ὑποστασεις; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, instead of being considered as one person manifesting himself in various ways, were stated as three persons, each of whom has a permanent distinct subsistence. It was distinguished from Arianism by ascribing to all the three persons μια ουσια. And as Athanasius speaks, το μεν φυσιν δηλοι της θεοτητος· το δε τας των τριων ἰδιοτητας. Those who held this system would not, with the Arians, call the Son and the Holy Ghost ἑτερουσιοι, because this conveyed the idea of separation and inferiority, such an essential difference as there is between the nature of the creature and that of the Creator. Neither did they adopt the words ταυτοουσιοι and μονοουσιοι, because these might seem to favour the Sabellian confusion of persons. But they said the three persons were ὁμοουσιοι, of one substance. Jesus Christ, said the council of Chalcedon, is ὁμοὐσιος ἡμιν κατα την ανθρωποτητα, και ὁμοουσιος

πατρι κατα την θεοτητα: an expression which leads us to conceive the meaning of the church in those days to have been, that as all men partake of the same human nature, so the divine nature was common to the three persons.

But it will occur to you that three persons having a distinct subsistence, and having the same divine nature, are in reality three Gods; that the most perfect agreement in purpose, and the most invariable consent in operation, do by no means correspond to that unity of God, which is a first principle of natural religion; and that if those who held the third opinion had reason to accuse the Arians of paganism and idolatry for worshipping a supreme and an inferior God, the Arians had reason to accuse them in turn of polytheism for believing in three Gods. Accordingly, the names which Mr. Gibbon gives to the three distinct systems concerning the nature of the Divine Trinity, which he professes to delineate in the second volume of his History, are these, Arianism, Tritheism, Sabellianism; and the charge which is commonly brought against Athanasians, the name given to those who hold the third or Catholic opinion, is that they are Tritheists. It is certain, however, that Athanasius and his followers uniformly disclaimed tritheism,—and that while they asserted the equality of the Son and the Holy Ghost with the Father, by saying that the divine nature was common to all the three, they maintained at the same time, that the three persons were united in a manner perfectly different from that union which subsists amongst individuals of the same species. In order, therefore, to do justice to the Catholic system, it is necessary to state the manner in which those who hold this system endeavour to reconcile the divine unity with the subsistence of the three persons. What I have read of their writings upon this subject, appears to me reducible to two heads. 1. That the Father is, in their language, the fountain of deity, the principle and origin of the Son and Holy Ghost. 2. That the three persons are inseparably joined together.

1. The Father is the fountain of deity, πηγη θεοτητος. They called the Father αρχη, not in the common sense of that word, the beginning, as if the Father existed before the Son and the Holy Ghost, but in the philosophical sense of the word, the principle from which another

arises. In this sense he was called ανεξχος—αγεννητος—αιτια υιου. It was said to be implied in the very name of Father that he was αιτια και αρχη του εξ αυτου γεννηθεντος; and the difference of the three persons was conceived to consist in this, that the Father was αναιτιος: and that both the Son and the Holy Ghost were αιτιατοι.

Upon this principle the ancient Catholics grounded the unity of God. They did not conceive that there were three unoriginated beings, but that there was μια αρχη θεοτητος, and that the Father, by being the αρχη, is the ενωσις. God, they said, is one, because the Son and Holy Ghost are referred εις εν αιτιον. On this account they held, that, although there are three Persons in the Godhead, μονας θεοτητος αδιαιρετος.

Different names were employed to express the manner of causation with regard to the two persons who were considered as αιτιατοι. It was said of the one that he was begotten, of the other that he proceeded. The generation of the one was suggested by his being called in Scripture υιος του Θεου—μονογενης παρα πατρος. The procession of the other was suggested partly by his being called πνευμα, α πνεω, *spiro*, I send forth breath; and partly by our Lord's saying in one place, John xv. 26, το πνευμα της αληθειας, ο παρα του πατρος εκπορευεται. But although generation be applied to the Son, we must be sensible that the manner in which he derived his origin from the Father cannot bear any analogy to the proper meaning of the word; and that all attempts to explain the manner of this derivation must be in the highest degree presumptuous and unprofitable. The procession of the Holy Ghost is a word of more general signification, and does not convey any precise idea of the manner in which this Person is derived. It is appropriated to Him, because the Scripture nowhere says of him that he is begotten of the Father. But it is impossible for us to form a clear apprehension of the distinction between procession and generation, the two terms which are stated as the ιδιοτητες of the Son and the Holy Ghost; both denote the communication of the divine essence from the Father; and all the attempts of ancient and of modern writers, to discriminate the modes in which the communication may be made, consist of words without meaning.

Although those who held the third system of the Trinity maintained the unity of the Godhead, by saying that the Son and the Holy Ghost were derived from the Father, they are not to be understood as meaning that the existence of these two Persons had a beginning, or that the Father, after existing for some time alone, brought them into being by an act of his will, and imparted to them such powers as he chose. This is the Arian creed; but it cannot be received by those who hold τρεις ὑποστασεις εν μια ουσια; for the divine nature, being incapable of change, cannot be extended to three Persons after having been peculiar to one; and if the being of two of these Persons had been precarious, communicated to them at a certain time by the will of another, both of them would want eternity and immutability, two of the essential properties of the divine nature.

The Athanasians, therefore, in consistency with the leading principles of their system, considered the Son and the Holy Ghost as having always existed with the Father; and they illustrated their meaning by saying that as light cannot exist without effulgence, nor the sun without emitting his rays, nor the mind without reason—so the Father never existed without the Son and the Spirit.

The Son was υιος αϊδιος αϊδιου πατρος—ων συναϊδιος και τω ιδιω πνευματι.* And in the confession of faith of Gregory, an illustrious writer of the third century, after a description of the three Persons, it is added, τριας τελεια δοξη, και αϊδιοτητι και βασιλεια μη μεριζομενη.

The same general reasoning applies to the necessary and eternal co-existence of both the αιτιατοι with the αιτιος. But as the dignity of the person of the Son was much more an object of attention and controversy in the early ages, than that of the Spirit, most of the images, and the greatest part of the language employed on this subject, refer particularly to him. One of the images, probably suggested by the Apostle John's often calling the Son λογος, arose from the meaning of that word. It was said by the Platonic fathers, that "God being an eternal intelligence from the beginning had the λογος in himself, being eternally rational;" and hence they often called Jesus Christ

λογος αϊδιος πατρος. I shall illustrate this principle by the words of Bishop Horsley, who concurs in it with the ancient Platonists. "The personal subsistence of a divine λογος is implied in the very idea of a God. The argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and seems to be founded on Scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the divine intellect exerted on itself; from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. For as the Father ever was, his perfections have for ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever-active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son." *

This method of illustrating the necessary co-existence of the Son with the Father, which has passed from the Platonic fathers of the second century through a succession of Athanasian writers to the present time, does certainly convey to ordinary readers an idea that the Son is merely an attribute of the Father, the reason of God; and, accordingly, Dr. Priestley and others have represented the earlier writers who called the Son λογος, as speaking a Sabellian language; and they say that it was to avoid the Sabellianism implied in the use of this word, that the Arians made a distinction between the λογος, which always was with God, *i. e.* his own reason, and the λογος, by whom he made the world, *i. e.* the person whom he created to be the instrument of making other things. The former is λογος ενδιαθετος, *ratio insita*, reason. The latter is λογος προφορικος, *ratio prolata*, speech, reason, brought forth in words. The Son, said Arius, might be compared to the latter, in order to express that he proceeded immediately from God, but he cannot be compared to the former, which means only an attribute of the Deity. This was a distinction, by which Arius wished not only to avoid the appearance of Sabellianism, but also to evade the argument for the necessary and eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father, drawn from his being called λογος Θεου. It cannot be denied that the analogy between the

* Horsley's Tracts, p. 61. 3d edit.

relation of the Father to the λογος, and the relation of every man's mind to its own thoughts; which the early writers laid hold of as furnishing an argument for the eternal co-existence of the Son, was pursued too far by some of them, and that the obscurity and inconsistency which always flow from an abuse of images was the consequence. At the same time it is certain that the very same writers, who make the most frequent use of this image, far from conceiving the λογος to be an attribute of the Father, speak of the Son as a distinct person, and as eternal; it has been made probable by Bishop Bull, that, when they spoke of λογος ενδιαθετος, they meant a person, the offspring of the divine mind, who, having been from eternity with the Father, became before the creation λογος προφορικος; and we know that Athanasius, probably aware of the abuse of this image, does not approve of applying either λογος ενδιαθετος or λογος προφορικος as a description of the Son, but calls him υιος αυτοτελης.

The distinction, which the ancient Catholic writers upon the Trinity made between λογος ενδιαθετος and λογος προφορικος, is connected with a circumstance which has contributed very much to this apparent embarrassment and contradiction in what they say of the person of the Son. The circumstance is this, that the generation of the Son has with them different meanings, according as it respects the divine nature of this person, or his exertions towards the creatures. The generation of the Son properly means the manner in which the divine essence was from all eternity communicated to him. In respect of this, he is styled in Scripture μονογενης παρα πατρος; and, in the Nicene creed, Θεος εκ Θεου; and, in reference to this, Athanasius says, Θεος αει ων αει του υιου πατηρ εστι. But the ancients often speak of a generation of the Son which took place at a particular time, immediately before the creation of the world. By this they mean, not the beginning of his existence, but the display of his powers in the production of external objects. In reference to this, Athanasius explains the expression which Paul applies to the Son, πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως, begotten before all creation; not that he then began to be, for he had existed as a distinct person from all eternity, but he had remained with the Father without exerting his powers upon external objects,

and at the creation came forth from the Father. This, therefore, was properly named προελευσις—προβολη, *prolatio*, the projection of his energies; and the ancient writers, who gave it the name of generation, never conceived that this coming forth to act was the beginning of the Son's existence. But the Arians, laying hold of this improper expression, and sheltering their opinion concerning the creation of the Son under what the ancients had said of his figurative generation, declared it to be an article of their faith, that the Son did not exist before he was begotten. The declaration appears to carry intrinsic evidence of its own truth. Yet the council of Nice condemned those who say of the Son πριν γεννηθηναι ουκ ην; a part of the anathematizing clause, of which we could not make sense, if we did not know that the ancient writers, who say that the Son was begotten when he came forth to create, understood by this expression merely a figurative generation, not the beginning of his existence but the exertion of his powers, and that they believed that before this προελευσις ὁ λογος, as John speaks, ην προς τον Θεον.

There is yet a third generation of which the ancients speak, when "the Word was made flesh." This generation is part of that οικονομια which the Scriptures reveal, and there is much better authority for applying the word generation in this sense than in the former. For the angel said to Mary, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,—therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*

It is plain from what has been said, that neither the προελευσις of the Son, nor his incarnation, has any connexion with the manner of his being. They were only what the ancients called συγκαταβασεις, acts of condescension in a person who had a complete existence. But in this view they serve to illustrate the first principle of which we are now speaking. For, by being acts of condescension, they imply that subordination in the Son which results from the Father's being the foundation of deity. There cannot be degrees of perfection in the godhead, a greater and a less divinity; and, if the Son be ὁμοουσιος πατρι, he must possess all the essential perfections of deity. But he is, in

* Luke i. 35.

this respect, less than the Father, that he hath received from him. He is αυτοθεος, a word of frequent use among the ancient writers of the Trinity, if the word be understood to mean *ipse Deus*, very God, but he is not αυτοθεος, if the word be understood to mean *Deus a se ipso*; for, in this sense, the Father alone is αυτοθεος, while the Son is θεος εκ θεου. When Jesus therefore says, "my Father is greater than I," although, upon the principles of the third system, he cannot mean any difference of nature, he may mean that pre-eminence of the Father which is necessarily implied in his being αγεννητος; a pre-eminence which does not appear to us to admit of any act of condescension in the Father, of his receiving a commission, or being appointed to hold an office; whereas there is a manifest congruity in the Son, who derived his nature from the Father, being employed to exert the perfections of the Godhead in the accomplishment of a particular purpose. Hence, as our Lord speaks of the Father's giving him a commission, of his being sent by God, of his coming to do the will of God, so those ancient writers, who represent the Son as equal to the Father, speak of him at the same time as αγγελος, υπηρετης Θεου; and the fitness of that οικονομια, which he undertook for the salvation of mankind, results from the essential subordination of the Son to the Father.

In like manner, the Spirit who "proceedeth from the Father" is, upon that account, subordinate to the Father. Hence, in numberless places of Scripture, he is both called the Spirit of God, and is said to be sent by the Father. But the Scriptures intimate also a subordination of the Spirit to the Son, for he is called the Spirit of Christ. Jesus says, in the discourse formerly quoted from John's Gospel, "I will send him—He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you."* It is not indeed anywhere said in Scripture, that the Spirit proceedeth from the Son, and, for this reason, the council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, when they condemned the errors of Macedonius, introduced amongst the exalted titles which they applied to the Spirit, this designation, taken literally from Scripture, το εκ του πατρος εκπορευομενον. In the fifteenth century it became a controversy whether

* John xv. 26; xvi. 14.

the Spirit, not in respect of occasional mission, for none could deny what the Scriptures say, that the Spirit is sent by the Son, but, in respect of his nature, proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. Most of the Greek fathers, while they acknowledged the personality and divinity of the Spirit, would not adopt an expression concerning him, which appeared to them improper, because it is unscriptural, and preserved the language of the council of Constantinople, το πνευμα ὁ ἐκ του πατρος ἐκπορευεται. But the Latin fathers argued in this manner. Since the Spirit, who is called in Scripture the Spirit of God, is called also the Spirit of his Son; and since the Spirit, who is sent by the Father, is also said to be sent by the Son, it follows that there is the same subordination of the Spirit to the Son as to the Father. But the subordination of the Spirit to the Father is grounded upon his proceeding from the Father, and his being subordinate to the Son must have the same foundation, *i. e.* as the divine nature was communicated by the Father to the Son, so it was communicated by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost.

Upon the strength of this reasoning the Latin fathers made an addition to the creed of Constantinople, and instead of simply translating the clause used in that creed, "*qui a Patre procedit*," they said, "*qui a Patre filioque procedit.*" The Greek churches, who did not admit the truth of that which was added, were enraged at the presumption of the Latin churches in making an addition, upon account of their peculiar tenets, to a creed which had been composed by a general council, and had been declared to be unchangeable; and a contention for authority thus mingling itself, as has often happened in the church of Christ, with a difference of opinion, the word "*filioque*" came to be an ostensible ground of that schism between the Greek and Latin churches, which began in the eighth century, and continues till this day. The reformed churches, without vindicating the Latin church, or asserting its right to make the addition, acquiesce in the reasoning upon which its opinion was founded, and say with it that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

I have now stated the full amount of the first principle, by which I said those who hold the third or Catholic sys-

tem of the Trinity endeavour to maintain the unity of God. They do not believe in three unoriginated beings, co-ordinate and independent. But they believe in three persons, from the first of whom the second and third did, from all eternity, derive the nature and perfections of the Godhead; and, upon this communication of the substance of the Father to the Son, and the substance of the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost, they ground that gradual subordination, which, with an entire sameness of nature, constitutes the most perfect consent and co-operation of the three persons.

But after we have admitted all that is implied in this first principle, the third system of the Trinity appears to fall very short of those conceptions of the unity of God which reason and Scripture teach us to form. We must therefore take into view the second principle.

2. It may be thus expressed; the three persons are inseparably joined together. So necessary and indissoluble is this connexion, that as the Father never existed without the Son and the Spirit, so the Son and the Spirit were not separated from him by being produced out of his substance. Every idea of section, and division, and interval, which is suggested to us by material objects and by individuals of the same species, is to be laid aside when we raise our conceptions to that distinction of persons under which the Deity is revealed to us in the Scripture. We are to attempt to conceive that this distinction does not dissolve the continuity of nature,—that while every one of the three persons has his distinct subsistence, they are never μεμερισμένοι, ἢ ξένοι ἀλλήλων, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀλλήλοις ἀσυγχύτως περιχωροῦντες.

There were two phrases which the ancient Catholics employed to mark this idea. In order to show that they did not consider the Son as sent forth from the Father, as our children are sent forth to have an existence separated from their parents, they called his generation an interior, not an external production, meaning that he remained in the Father, from whom he was produced; and, in order to mark the indissoluble connexion of all the three persons, they used the word περιχώρησις or ἐμπεριχώρησις, *circum-incessio*, which is thus defined, "that union by which one being exists in another, not only by

a participation of nature, but by the most intimate presence with it, so that, although the two beings are distinct, they dwell in and penetrate one another." They considered both these phrases as warranted by such expressions in Scripture as the following, John x. 38, "That ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him;" and, John xiv. 10, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." And they considered this indwelling of the persons in one another as completing the unity of God.

If, upon this subject, they sometimes speak unintelligibly, and at other times approach to the language of Sabellianism, the apology is to be found in their own confession, that the manner of the divine existence is above the comprehension of man, and in their anxiety to reconcile a fundamental truth of natural religion with the discoveries of revelation.

I cannot better illustrate the third or Catholic system which I have now delineated, than by giving an account of what is called the Platonic Trinity. I do not mean the Trinity held by Plato himself; for, although it has been said that this philosopher anticipated the revelation of three persons in the godhead, and that his philosophy prepared the world for receiving this incomprehensible truth, yet the passages relating to this subject, which I either found in his works, when I read them, or which I have, since that time, seen extracted from him, are so few in number, so short, and so obscure, that it seems to me impossible for any person, who had not much previous knowledge of the subject, to draw that conclusion from them, which they have sometimes been brought to establish. It has been said, indeed, that the Trinity of persons in the Deity was a secret doctrine of Plato, which, although couched in his writings under dark words, was plainly taught to those disciples who were able to receive it. I know not upon what evidence this is said; but supposing it to be true, it must be allowed that this secret doctrine was not published to the world till the second or third century of the Christian era, when the Platonic school, following out the sublime views of the divine nature given by their master, which in some points corresponded with the Christian revelation, and themselves ex-

lightened by acquaintance with the Gospel, which they could not fail to acquire while it was spreading over the Roman empire, and was embraced by many Platonists, brought forward in the language of Plato a scheme very much resembling what I called the third system of the Trinity.

The following is a short view of this scheme, in the words of Bishop Horsley, who writes like one deeply read in ancient philosophy, and whose acknowledged eminence as a man of science procures credit for his account of the opinions of other men. Dr. Priestley having asserted in one of his publications, that it was never imagined that the three component members of the Platonic Trinity were either equal to each other, or were, strictly speaking, one, his zealous and able antagonist ascribes this assertion to an ignorance of the true principles of Platonism, and opposes to it the following account of these principles, which I gather from different parts of his 13th letter to Dr. Priestley. The three principles in the Deity are το αγαθον, goodness, νους, intelligence, ψυχη, vitality. These three, strictly speaking, are more one, than any thing in nature of which unity may be predicted. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first being, the second and third must come forth. All the three were included by the Platonists in the divine nature, the το θειον; a notion implying the same equality which the Christian Fathers maintained. To the first principle they ascribed an activity of a very peculiar kind—such as might be consistent with an undisturbed immutability. He acts μενων εν ἑαυτου ηθει, by a simple indivisible unvaried energy; which, as it cannot be broken into a multitude of distinct acts, cannot be adapted to the variety of external things; on which, therefore, the first God acts not, either to create or to preserve them, otherwise than through the two subordinate principles. But eternal activity was supposed to be the consequence of the goodness of the Deity; and from this eternal activity flowed, by necessary consequence, the existence of intellect, and the vital principle, in which alone the divine nature is active upon external things. According to this system too the world was supposed to be eternal, because it was conceived that the goodness of

the Deity could not suffer that to be delayed which, because he hath done it, appears fit to be done. But the world was supposed to be eternal, not by its own nature, but by the choice of a free agent who might have willed the contrary; whereas intellect and the vital principle have been eternal by necessity, as branches of the divinity; and, therefore, when the converted Platonists, upon the authority of revelation, discarded the notion of the world's eternity, they did not find themselves obliged to discard with it the eternity of the νους, which they considered as equivalent to the Christian λογος, because that was an eternity of quite another kind.

Such is the view of the Platonic Trinity given by Dr. Horsley; and in perfect conformity to this is the confession of his faith in the Christian Trinity, which his 13th and 15th letters to Dr. Priestley contain, and which form the most useful recapitulation that I can give of what has been said upon the Catholic system. "I hold," says Dr. Horsley, "that the Father's faculties are not exerted on external things, otherwise than through the Son and the Holy Ghost; that the Scriptures, by discovering a trinity, teach clearly that the metaphysical unity of the divine nature is not an unity of persons, but that they do not teach such a separation and independence of these persons as amounts to tritheism. I maintain that the three persons are one being—one by mutual relation, indissoluble connexion, and gradual subordination; so strictly one, that any individual thing in the whole world of matter and of spirit presents but a faint shadow of their unity. I maintain that each person by himself is God, because each possesses fully every attribute of the divine nature. But I maintain that these three Persons are all included in the very idea of God. I maintain the equality of the three Persons in all the attributes of the divine nature, and their equality in rank and authority with respect to all created things, whatever relations or differences may subsist between themselves. Differences there must be, lest we confound the persons, which was the error of Sabellius. But the differences can only consist in the personal properties, lest we divide the substance, and make a plurality of independent gods."

SECTION IV.

THE third or Catholic system of the Trinity is the declared faith of both the established churches of Great Britain. The first of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England contains this clause: "And in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And the creed called the Creed of Athanasius, because it delivers with great fulness of expression that doctrine of which he was the distinguished champion, is appointed to be read upon certain days, as the most explicit declaration that the Church of England is equally removed from the Sabellian and the Arian systems. The words in the second chapter of our Confession of Faith are nearly the same with those of the first article of the Church of England. "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son." And this doctrine is accounted by our church so essential, that it is introduced into the catechism which they recommend for the instruction of young persons in the principles of the Christian religion.

In Scotland there were few publications during the course of the last century that particularly respected the doctrine of the Trinity; and in most parts of the country the minds of the great body of the people, from the force of early instruction, acquiesce, perhaps without much speculation or inquiry, in the Catholic system. But in England many writers since the beginning of the last century have drawn a large share of the public attention, and have produced a considerable degree of agitation in the minds of Christians, by the theories which they have offered, in order to reconcile the trinity of persons with the unity of the Godhead. A particular account of these theories

would lead into a very perplexed and tedious detail, and is in reality of no use, because all of them approach to one or other of the three systems that have been mentioned. By assuming a new name they may seem to keep clear of the objections that have been urged against their parent system; but when they are narrowly canvassed, they are always found to be resolvable into the same principles, and they must be tried upon the same grounds.

Although for these reasons I shall not recite the names of all who have held some particular opinion about the Trinity, or attempt to discriminate their tenets, there is one exception which I cannot avoid making. Dr. Samuel Clarke is so deservedly held in high estimation for his abilities as a general scholar, and for the excellence and usefulness both of his sermons and of his discourses on the evidence of natural and revealed religion; his theory of the Trinity is a work executed with such labour and skill, and the controversy to which it gave occasion was carried on with such eagerness at the time, and is still referred to in so many theological treatises, that there would be an essential defect in this view of opinions concerning the Trinity, if no particular notice were taken of his system.

Dr. Clarke has entitled his book, The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. The first part is a collection and explication of all the texts in the New Testament relating to the doctrine of the Trinity. The collection is a complete and a fair one; his explication of some of the texts does not agree with the interpretation most generally received; but he defends his criticisms like a scholar and an acute reasoner; and upon this collection of texts and his explication of them, is founded the second part, in which what he accounts the true doctrine of the Trinity is set forth at large in fifty-five distinct propositions. He accompanies these propositions with references to the particular texts which support them, and often both with illustrations of his own, and with citations from ancient and modern writers; his object being to show that the doctrine which he professes to ground upon the Scriptures is also agreeable to the sentiments of the succession of ecclesiastical writers. It has been said that there is not the same fairness in his citations, as in the collection of texts. He not only omits those passages which are unfavourable to his

own opinion, but he often leaves out parts of the sentences which he quotes, and he gives them in so detached a form, that they sometimes appear to speak a meaning perfectly different from that which a reader, who has an opportunity of comparing them with the context, perceives to be the sense of the author. His book, therefore, is by no means a safe guide to those who wish to be instructed in the sentiments of the ancient church with regard to the Trinity. But to those who have derived that knowledge from other less exceptionable authority, or who read his book merely from a desire to know what Dr. Clarke himself thought, it presents the following consistent and intelligible scheme, which I give as the amount of the fifty-five propositions that constitute the second part of his book.

There is one living intelligent agent or person, who alone is self-existent, the author of all being and the origin of all power, who is supreme over all. With this first Supreme Cause and Father of all, there have existed from the beginning a second divine person, who is his Word or Son, and a third divine person, who is his Spirit; and these three are distinguished in Scripture by their personal characters. When the Scriptures mention the one God, the only God, or God by way of eminence, they always mean the Person of the Father. The Son derived his being and all his attributes from the Father, and therefore he is not the self-existent substance. But as the Scriptures have not declared the metaphysical manner of this derivation, they are worthy of censure who affirm that the Son was made out of nothing; and, as the Scriptures never make any limitation of time in declaring the Son's derivation from the Father, they are also worthy of censure who say that there was a time when the Son was not. The Son derived his being from the Father, not by mere necessity of nature, but by an act of the Father's incomprehensible power and will. In like manner, the Spirit, without any limitation of time, derived his being from the Father. The Son is sometimes called God, not on account of his metaphysical nature, how divine soever, but on account of his relative attributes and divine authority communicated to him from the Father over us. To the Son are ascribed all communicable divine powers, *i. e.* all powers which include not the independence and supreme

authority by which the God and Father of all is distinguished; for in this the Son is evidently subordinate to the Father, that he derived his being, attributes, and power from the Father. Every action of the Son is only the exercise of the Father's power communicated to him, and the reason why the Scriptures, although they style the Father God, and also style the Son God, yet at the same time always declare there is but one God, is, because there being in the monarchy of the universe but one authority, original in the Father, derivative in the Son, therefore the one God, absolutely speaking, always signifies him in whom the power and authority are original and underived. In like manner, the Holy Spirit, whatever his metaphysical nature be, and whatever divine power or dignity be ascribed to him, is evidently subordinate to the Father; and, in Scripture, he is also represented as subordinate to the Son, both by nature and by the will of the Father. And thus all authority and power are original in the Father, and from him derived to the Son, and exercised according to the will of the Father, by the operation of the Son, and by the influences of the Spirit.

This system was regarded at its first appearance as heretical. A prosecution was commenced against the author by the lower house of Convocation in England; and he was attacked by many divines, at the head of whom is Dr. Waterland. After reading a great part of what has been written by Dr. Clarke and his antagonists, it appears to me that the difference between them may be stated within a narrow compass. Dr. Clarke avoids the most offensive expressions used by the Arians. Instead of calling Christ a creature, or limiting the beginning of his existence, he says "that the Son was eternally begotten by the will of the Father." But the word eternally in this sentence means nothing more than that the Son was begotten before all ages, before those measures of time which the succession of created objects furnishes, in the incomprehensible duration of the Father's eternity: and the phrase "by the will of the Father," implies that the Father might not have produced the Son, or that he might have produced him at any other time as well as at the time when he did; so that however great the powers are which the Father hath been pleased to communicate to the

Son, he is not essentially God, but there are, in the manner of his existence, a mutability and a dependence inconsistent with our ideas of the Divine Nature. The opinion of Dr. Clarke, therefore, is in reality that of the Semi-Arians, who were called Homoiousians, because they exalted Christ above the rank of creatures, and held that, not by necessity of nature, but by special privilege, he was like to God. On the other hand, according to the third system, eternity in its proper sense, and necessary existence, are ascribed to the Son. All the attributes of the godhead are conceived to belong to him by nature, and it is not supposed possible that he could be other than that which he is. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Son is not self-existent; for both account the Father the fountain of deity. But Dr. Clarke thinks, that, since the Son is not self-existent, he does not exist necessarily, while his opponents affirm, that, with the consent of the Father, and according to his will, yet by necessity of nature, the Son derived his being from the Father. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Son is subordinate to the Father; but the subordination of Dr. Clarke implies an essential inferiority of nature, while his opponents do not admit of any difference in point of duration or dignity, and understand the word subordination as respecting merely order. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons, to every one of whom the name God is applied: but Dr. Clarke considers that name as belonging in its highest sense to the Father, and only in an inferior sense to the other two, and thus maintains the unity of the godhead upon the same principle with the Arian system, while his opponents, making no distinction between the word God when applied in Scripture to the Father, and the same word when applied in Scripture to the Son, and inferring, from the language of Scripture, that it may also be applied to the Spirit, have recourse to the principles which were stated under the third system, for maintaining the unity of three persons, each of whom is truly God.

In stating this unity, the opponents of Dr. Clarke adhered to the word which had been used by the council of Nice, saying that the three persons were ὁμοούσιοι, con-substantial, which is rendered, both in the English Articles

and in our Confession of Faith, "of one substance." It did not escape the acuteness of Dr. Clarke, that the phrase is ambiguous. "One substance" may mean one numerical substance, *i. e.* a substance which is one in number, individual; or one generical substance, *i. e.* the same in kind, that which belongs to all of one kind, as Aristotle said all the stars are ὁμοουσια. On account of this ambiguity, Dr. Clarke required his opponents to declare in what sense they understood the word; and by a succession of writers, who followed his steps, and wished to expose the third system as untenable, the following dilemma is often stated. "If you mean, by con-substantial, that the three persons are of the same individual substance, you destroy their personality; for three persons, of whom each has not his own distinct substance, but who are in one substance, are only different modifications or manners of being, so that your Trinity becomes nominal and ideal, and in your zeal for the unity of the godhead, you recur to Sabellianism. If, on the other hand, you mean by con-substantial, that the three persons are of the same generical substance, then you destroy their unity; for three persons, having the same substance in kind, have each of them his own substance, and are, in reality, three beings."

This dilemma, like many others which appear to be inextricable, is merely captious. For the ancients, who seem to have understood ὁμοουσιος, as marking a generical identity of substance, declare that they consider the three persons as not separated from one another like three individuals of the same species, but as united in a manner more perfect than we are able to conceive; and the moderns, many of whom seem to understand con-substantial as marking a numerical identity of substance, declare that they consider each of the three persons as having a distinct subsistence, and the divine substance as in this respect essentially distinguished from every thing material, that without diminution or division it extends to three persons. The difficulty, therefore, arising from the ambiguity of the word con-substantial, with which those who hold the Catholic system have been so often pressed, is only a proof that it is a vain attempt to apply the terms of human science to the manner of the divine existence,

and that the multiplication of words upon this subject does not in any degree increase the stock of our ideas.

We are thus brought back, after reviewing a multiplicity of opinions, to the few simple positions which constitute the whole amount of the knowledge that Scripture has given us concerning the Trinity, and which may be thus briefly stated. The Scriptures, while they declare the fundamental truth of natural religion, that God is one, reveal two persons, each of whom, with the Father, we are led to consider as God, and ascribe to all the three distinct personal properties. It is impossible that the three can be one in the same sense in which they are three: and therefore it follows, by necessary inference, that the unity of God is not an unity of persons; but it does not follow, that it may not be an unity of a more intimate kind than any which we behold. An unity of consent and will neither corresponds to the conclusions of reason, nor is by any means adequate to a great part of the language of Scripture, for both concur in leading us to suppose an unity of nature. Whether the substance common to the three persons be specifically or numerically the same, is a question, the discussion of which cannot advance our knowledge, because neither of the terms is applicable to the subject; and after all our researches and reading, we shall find ourselves just where we began, incapable of perceiving the manner in which the three persons partake of the same divine nature. But we are very shallow philosophers indeed, if we consider this as any reason for believing that they do not partake of it; for we are by much too ignorant of the manner of the divine existence to be warranted to say that the distinction of persons is an infringement of the Divine unity. "It is strange boldness in men," says Bishop Stillingfleet, (iii. 352,) "to talk of contradictions in things above their reach. Hath not God revealed to us that he created all things; and is it not reasonable for us to believe this, unless we are able to comprehend the manner of doing it? Hath not God plainly revealed that there shall be a resurrection of the dead? And must we think it unreasonable to believe it, till we are able to comprehend all the changes of the particles of matter from the creation to the general resurrection? If nothing is to be believed but what may be comprehended, the very being of

God must be rejected, and all his unsearchable perfections. If we believe the attributes of God to be infinite, how can we comprehend them? We are strangely puzzled in plain ordinary, finite things; but it is madness to pretend to comprehend what is infinite; and yet, if the perfections of God be not infinite, they cannot belong to him. Let those, who presume to say that there is a contradiction in the Trinity, try their imaginations about God's eternity, not merely how he should be from himself, but how God should co-exist with all the differences of times, and yet there be no succession in his own being; and they will perhaps concur with me in thinking that there is no greater difficulty in the conception of the Trinity than there is of eternity. For three to be one is a contradiction in numbers; but whether an infinite nature can communicate itself to three different substances, without such a division as is among created beings, must not be determined by bare numbers, but by the absolute perfections of the Divine nature: which must be owned to be above our comprehension."

Since then the Scriptures teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one, and since the unity of three persons who partake of the same divine nature must of necessity be an unity of the most perfect kind, we may rest assured that the more we can abstract from every idea of inequality, division, and separation, provided we preserve the distinction of persons, our conceptions approach the nearer to the truth. But since the manner of the Divine existence is confessedly above our comprehension, and since no words or images that we can employ are found to correspond to the unity of these three persons, there are two inferences or advices that present themselves upon this subject, which I shall just mention in taking leave of it.

The first inference is, that men of speculation ought to exercise mutual forbearance if they differ from one another in their attempts to explain that which all acknowledge to be inexplicable. It is vain to think of confining the human mind to those researches in which she may easily attain some certain conclusion. She loves to soar and to roam, and she gathers much wisdom from her own most adventurous flights; but this lesson surely should not be one of the last, that those who presume to expatiate in the sublime regions, where the light of human science becomes

dim and uncertain, need not be surprised to meet with many wanderers. Every sober inquirer, who finds that, after all his investigations, the union of the three persons in the Godhead remains to him involved in impenetrable darkness, will judge with candour of the attempts made by other men to obtain a solution of the difficulties which presented themselves to their minds; and he will not readily suppose that they doubt of the fact, although they may differ from him in the manner of explaining the fact.

The second inference or advice is, that as you cannot expect to give the body of the people clear ideas of the manner in which the three persons are *united, it may be* better in discoursing to them, to avoid *any particular dis*cussion of this subject; and to follow here, *as in every* other instance, the pattern of teaching set *in the New Tes*tament. Our Lord and his *Apostles do not propose* any metaphysical explication *of the unity of the Divine* nature. But they assume it, and declare it *as a fundamental truth*; and they never insinuate that it is *in the* smallest degree infringed by the revelation which they give of the three persons. After this example, I advise you never to perplex the minds of the people with different theories of the Trinity, and never to suggest that the unity of the Divine nature is a questionable point; but, without professing to explain how the three persons are united, to place before your hearers, as you have occasion, the Scripture account of the Son and the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father, and thus to preserve upon their minds what the Scriptures have revealed, and what upon that account it is certainly of importance for them to learn, the dignity of the second and third persons, their relation to us, and their power to execute the gracious offices necessary for our salvation. These essential points of Christian instruction, which it is the duty of the ministers of the Gospel to impress upon the people, are revealed in the Scriptures in such a manner as to be in no danger of leading into the Sabellian, the Arian, or the Tritheistic scheme of the Trinity; and, therefore, if we adhere, as we ought always to do, to the pure revelation of Scripture in our account of the three persons, we have no occasion to expose to the people the defects of these schemes; and we may

reserve to ourselves all the speculations about the manner in which the three persons are united.

I conclude this specimen of the variety of opinions, and of the kind of language which you may expect to find in ancient and modern writers upon the Trinity, with mentioning the books from which I have derived most assistance.

The best writer in defence of the Catholic system of the Trinity is Bishop Bull. His works are published in a large folio volume, more than half of which is filled with the three following treatises: Defensio Fidei Nicenæ—Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ—Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio. All the three respect the Trinity, and are often quoted by succeeding writers, who borrow the greatest part of their matter from this very learned and able divine. His principal work is, Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, which consists of four parts. 1. The προϋπαρξις, pre-existence of the Son—2. το ὁμοουσιον, consubstantiality of the Son—3. το συναϊδιον, his eternal co-existence with the Father. 4. His subordination to the Father. Bishop Pearson, in his Exposition of the Creed, gives the same view of the Trinity with Bishop Bull; which is the true Athanasian scheme; and he states it as he states every other point in theology of which he treats, with clearness, with sound judgment, and with much learning. Dr. Cudworth, in that magazine of learning, which he calls the Intellectual System, gives a full view of the Christian and the Platonic Trinity. If you consult, when you read him, the ingenious and learned notes which Mosheim has added to his Latin edition of Cudworth, you will be preserved from some errors, and your views of the subjects treated will be much enlightened and improved. When you come down to the last century, Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity is the first book which will engage your attention. As a collection of texts upon the subject it is most useful; as a view of the opinions of the ancient church it is to be read, for the reasons which I mentioned, with suspicion; and as the argument of a very able and acute man, upon a subject which seems to have been near his heart, it is proper that you should read at the same time what was said by his opponents. There are two books by Dr. Waterland.

The one, Sermons in Defence of the Divinity of Jesus Christ; the other, A Vindication of Christ's Divinity. And there is an excellent book, not so controversial as Dr. Waterland's, which should be read by every student of divinity, A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity, by Dr. Thomas Randolph. Dr. Randolph opposes the principles of Dr. Clarke. But he writes directly in answer to a small book entitled, An Essay on Spirit, which presents a modification of the Arian system. You will read with pleasure a rational intelligible history of Arianism, which Dr. Jortin, who is very far from having any prejudice in favour of the Catholic system, gives in the third volume of his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History. I referred formerly to Ben Mordecai's Apology by Taylor. You will find many able attacks upon all the parts of the Catholic system, in the works of Mr. Thomas Emlyn.—Mosheim, in his valuable work, De Rebus Christianorum ante Christianum Magnum, gives the most complete information as to Sabellianism, and the other early systems of the Trinity; and his Church History joins to a short account of all the variety of opinions upon this subject, references to the authors who have treated of them more largely. Mr. Gibbon has introduced into his second volume a history of the Arian controversy, in which he professes to delineate the three systems of the Trinity. But it displays the same inveterate prejudice against religion, and the same constant endeavour to turn into ridicule every branch of that subject, which disgrace so large a portion of the writings of this illustrious historian. Some of the books which I have mentioned will prepare you for reading this part of Gibbon, by enabling you to discern where his account is lame or unfair. Lardner, Priestley, Lindsey, and the other Socinians of later times, incline to the Sabellian system, and employ every art to represent the other two as contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to the opinions of the primitive church. They have been attacked by many modern writers. But you will need no other antidote to their heresy than the volume of tracts by Bishop Horsley, a formidable antagonist, whose superiority in argument and in learning gives him some title to use that tone of disdain which pervades the volume.

It consists of a charge to the clergy of his Archdeaconry, exposing the errors in one of Dr. Priestley's publications; of letters to Dr. Priestley, occasioned by his reply to their charge; of a sermon on the incarnation, and of supplemental disquisitions.

Of other writers who have published particular schemes of the Trinity, I am almost entirely ignorant. From the short accounts of their works which have come in my way, I found that their schemes are only certain modifications of the first or the third systems, by which ingenious men have attempted to satisfy their own minds, or to remove the objections which others had made; and knowing well that, after all our researches, difficulties must remain, and that these difficulties furnish no argument against the truth, I thought that my time might be employed more profitably than by labouring to fix in my mind their nice discriminations, which it might be difficult to apprehend and impossible to retain.

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